

# MCC Messenger

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SPECIAL EDITION



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## €20 Million Investment for Inishowen

Inishowen's newest €20 million school development has now been completed, with students already attending classes in the state-of-the-art new build. Principal Caroline Doherty described this transition as a "hugely significant milestone for our entire school community".

Construction on the 5,274 square-metre extension began in the summer of 2023. The development includes ten general classrooms, ten specialist teaching rooms, a large PE hall, a library, staff facilities and a dedicated special educational needs suite. Local councillor Martin Farren, who has championed the project for more than a decade, said he was immensely proud of the completed school, describing it as among the finest in the country.

"Having seen it just a few weeks ago, I was completely blown away," he said. "The interior, the design, the overall finish, it's absolutely beautiful. It's a tremendous achievement, and I know the entire community will be very proud of what has been delivered." Cllr Farren noted that while the new school was badly needed and took many years to come to fruition, the result made the long wait worthwhile. He also acknowledged the many people who played a role in bringing the project to completion.

Funding for the school was first announced in early 2016 by then Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan, with an initial €10 million allocation. Nearly a decade later, the project has finally been delivered.

### Minister of State visits Merville CC



Mr C. Hegarty, Ms S. Donaghy, Ms C. Doherty, Minister Charlie McConalogue,

"At the time, I pressed the Minister strongly on the need for this school, and thankfully those concerns were heard," said Cllr Farren. "None of us expected it would take another ten years, but seeing it finished now makes it all worthwhile."

#### Minister McConalogue

Minister of State Charlie McConalogue has also praised the development, describing it as a major investment for Inishowen that will revitalise both the school and the wider Merville area. He commended the work of Principal Doherty, the school staff, board of management, parents' association, Donegal ETB, the Department of Education, and Woodvale Construction Company for delivering the project to a high standard.

An open evening for parents, guardians, and the wider community was held in early January which offered an opportunity to view the new facilities. Meanwhile, work at Merville Community College will continue into the new year as the project enters Phase Two, which includes the demolition of the lower building, the creation of new hard play areas and parking, and the widening of the school entrance.

Read more on page 18

*"This is a hugely significant milestone for our entire school community."* Ms C. Doherty, Principal, Merville Community College



Features



School News



Opinion



Sport Extra

# New Planet Discovery by University of Galway

Well done to past pupil Dan McLachlan who was part of an international team of astronomers, co-led by researchers at the University of Galway, who have made the unexpected discovery of a new planet. Detected at an early stage of formation around a young analogue of our own Sun, the planet is estimated to be about 5 million years-old and most likely a gas giant of similar size to Jupiter.

The ground-breaking discovery was made using one of the world's most advanced observatories - the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (ESO's VLT) in the Atacama Desert in Chile. The new planet has been named WISPIT 2b.

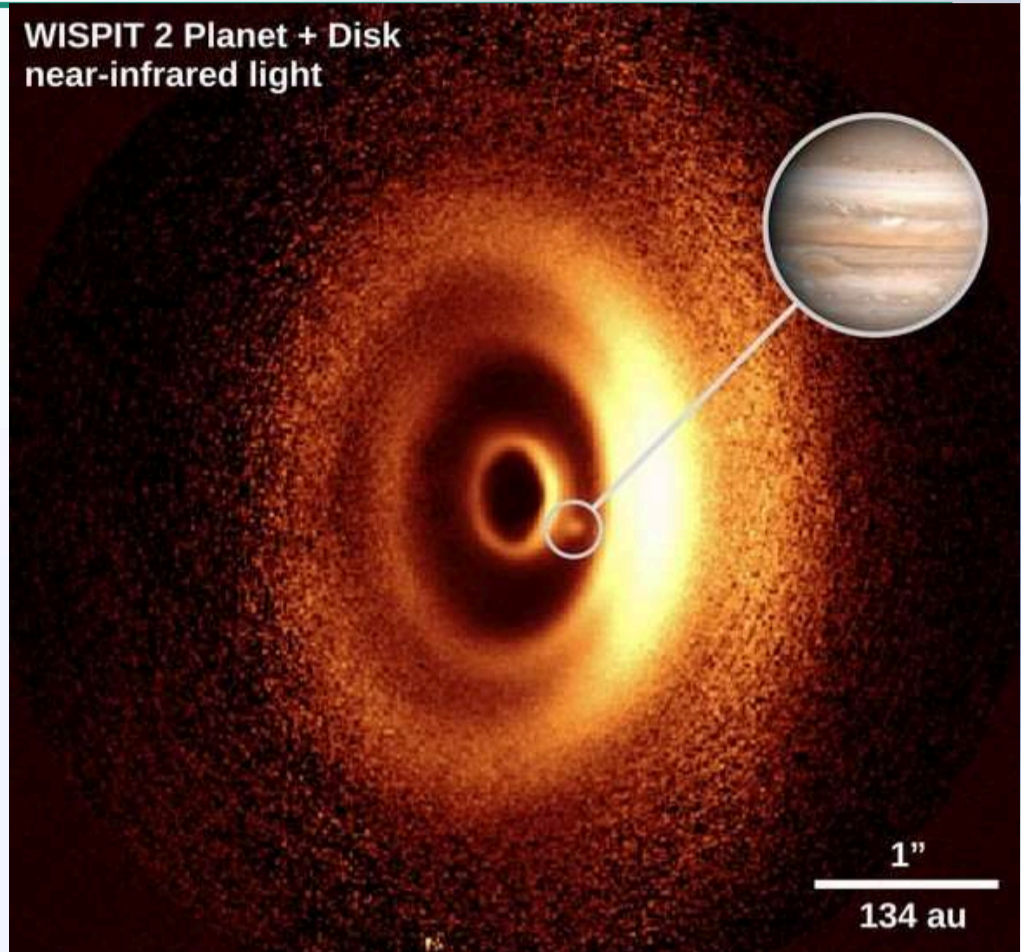
The study, which was led by Leiden University, University of Galway and University of Arizona, has been published in the international journal *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

Dr Christian Ginski, lecturer at the School of Natural Sciences, University of Galway and second author of the study, said: "We used these really short snapshot observations of many young stars - only a few minutes per object - to determine if we could see a little dot of light next to them that is caused by a planet. However, in the case of this star, we instead detected a completely unexpected and exceptionally beautiful multi-ringed dust disk. When we saw this multi-ringed disk for the first time, we knew we had to try and see if we could detect a planet within it, so we quickly asked for follow-up observations."

It is only the second time a confirmed planet has been detected at this early evolutionary stage around a young version of our Sun. The first one was discovered in 2018, by a research team also involving Dr Ginski. WISPIT 2b is also the first unambiguous planet detection in a multi-ringed disk, making it the ideal laboratory to study planet-disk interaction and subsequent evolution. The planet was captured in near infrared light - the type of view that someone would see when using night-vision goggles - as it is still glowing and hot after its initial formation phase.

The team at Leiden University and the University of Galway captured a spectacular clear image of the young proto-planet embedded in a disk gap. They also confirmed that the planet is orbiting its host star. The planet was also detected in visible light by a team from the University of Arizona using a specially designed instrument. This detection at a specific wavelength or colour of light indicates that the planet is still actively accreting gas as it is forming its atmosphere.

WISPIT 2 Planet + Disk  
near-infrared light



WISPIT 2b was detected as part of a five-year observational research project during which the international team sought to establish whether wide orbit gas giant planets are more common around younger or older stars. This led to the unexpected discovery of the new planet.

Dust and gas-rich disks around young stars are the birth cradles of planets. They can look quite spectacular with many different structures such as rings and spiral arms, which researchers believe are related to planets forming within them. The disk around WISPIT 2b has a radius of 380 astronomical units - about 380 times the distance between Earth and the Sun.

Dr Ginski added: "Capturing an image of these forming planets has proven extremely challenging and it gives us a real chance to understand why the many thousands of older exoplanet systems out there look so diverse and so different from our own solar system. I think many of our colleagues who study planet formation will take a close look at this system in the years to come."

The study was led by an early-career PhD student, Richelle van Capelleveen from Leiden University and co-led by a graduate student team at the University of Galway.

The research findings were co-authored by Dr Ginski and three Physics graduate students who are specialising in Astrophysics at the University of Galway.

A companion study by the University of Arizona was led by Professor Laird Close, where observations were triggered based on the information shared about the new disk by the University of Galway and Leiden University team.

Richelle van Capelleveen said: "Discovering this planet was an amazing experience - we were incredibly lucky. WISPIT 2, a young version of our Sun, is located in a little-studied group of young stars, and we did not expect to find such a spectacular system. This system will likely be a benchmark for years to come."

Dr Ginski said: "We were so fortunate to have these incredible young researchers on the case. This is the next generation of astrophysicists who I am sure will make more breakthrough discoveries in the years to come."

Dan McLachlan, past pupil of Merville community College and MSc student in Physics with a specialisation in Astrophysics at University of Galway, said: "In my experience so far working in astronomy, sometimes you can get so focused on a small task and you forget about the big picture, and when you zoom out and take in the magnitude of what you are working on it shocks you. This was one such project (an exoplanet direct detection!) and it was such a mind-blowing thing to be a part of. I feel so well treated by the University of Galway Physics department and especially my supervisor Dr Christian Ginski to have provided me with the opportunity to be part of such an exciting project."



OLLSCOIL NA  
GAILLIMHE

UNIVERSITY  
OF GALWAY



Dan McLachlan

# TYs Run Amuck in Tullagh



**Mary O'Gorman**

TY began their year with an unforgettable adventure, diving into a range of challenging team-building activities in Clonmany. The standout event was the infamous "Mud Run." Spanning over 200 meters, it was packed with unexpected surprises, and even Mr Monagle and Ms O'Hare took on the challenge. This was certainly not for the faint-hearted!

Students tried their hand at fire building, with varying levels of success, and also constructed survival shelters. Afterwards, they enjoyed engaging in ball games and plenty of treats. The outdoor showers added an interesting twist, while the changing rooms were memorable for reasons not immediately obvious, in fact someone might still be hunting for their black size 9 trainer!

TY tutors were equally impressed with their day. Ms Browne said, "This was a perfect opportunity for students to break down barriers and bond with one another in a safe, unspoiled environment. It certainly was one of the highlights of TY. An unforgettable experience!"

A big thank you to everyone who participated and contributed to the fun. This experience set a lively tone for an entertaining year ahead!

We gathered some reflections from several TY students about their day. Tiana Reddin shared, "It was a fantastic day with my friends. It wasn't what I anticipated, but it was enjoyable. I feel like Bear Grylls now!" Ema Vasiliauskaite expressed, "I was quite nervous about it; I couldn't overcome my fear of the big slide." Peter O'Gorman summed it up by saying, "The team-building games were a lot of fun, but the mud had a terrible smell."



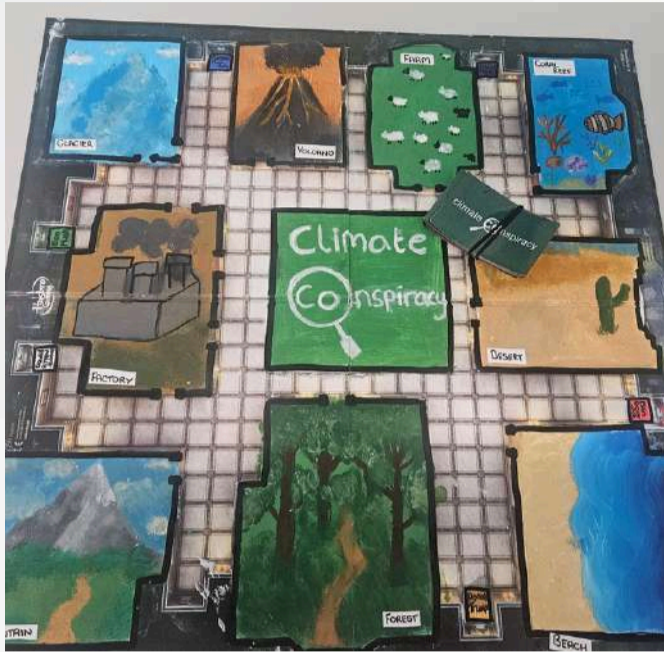
**Ryan Cavanagh, Peter O'Gorman, Marc Oslé Maguire**



**Tiana Reddin**



# Trocaire Workshops



Game Changers is a programme designed for young individuals eager to explore pressing issues that impact our world today. In 2025, the initiative centred around the theme of Climate Justice, showcasing the innovative and engaging games created by youth to highlight climate justice as a global issue.

The Trócaire development education team facilitated complimentary workshops in schools and youth organisations, assisting young people, educators, and youth workers throughout this journey. These workshops explored the reasons behind climate change as a global justice concern and introduced participants to game design techniques. Following this, young people crafted their own games focused on climate change and submitted them for the national Game Changers competition.



**THE GLOBAL GOALS**  
For Sustainable Development



Stephen Farley from Trócaire travelled to Merville CC on Wednesday 25th September and conducted workshops with all TY classes on Climate Change. The workshops were very interesting and engaging. He looked at the causes and consequences of Climate Change.

TYs then had the opportunity to raise awareness about this topic through the upcoming Trócaire competitions. The Post Primary competitions ask students to raise awareness by either designing a game on Climate Change or creating a six-minute documentary based on any of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**TROCAIRE**  
Working for a Just World

Merville Community College is proud to be part of the Worldwide Global Schools programme that encourages and supports Global Citizenship-based activities in our school. As part of the TY Global Citizenship class, we were fortunate to have Stephen Farley from Trócaire visit us in September 2025 to deliver a workshop on Climate Change.

This workshop tied in perfectly with the work we had been doing on the Sustainable Development Goals. It was informative yet engaging, with lots of student-centred activities. In the words of Diane Ackerman, *“Play is our brains’ favourite way of learning.”* With this quote in mind, we decided to participate in the Trócaire Games for Climate Change competition.



The Climate Change games were mostly made in groups. I was extremely impressed with the range of ideas and the creativity shown by the TY students. I encouraged students to make the games as sustainable as possible in keeping with the theme. Students were asked to create games that were creative, fun, informative, and also marketable. I was amazed at the games created by the TY students; they really took on board the issue of sustainability using old wood and scrap materials found in school or at home. Many students upcycled old unused games from home and gave the games a new lease of life.

In order to get a better idea of the educational and entertainment value of the games, the games were peer-evaluated by the students themselves while I made some observations as the GCE teacher. The games were set up in class, students played each game and filled in a brief evaluation on each game after trying it out. The evaluation was brief, based on the “three stars and a wish” idea, so students gave three positive comments about the game they played and one suggestion. This worked really well, and students got to read the comments made on their own game at the very end. They had the chance to make finishing touches to their games based on this feedback.

It was a very worthwhile activity, and a large number of these games will now go forward to represent Merville Community College in the National Trócaire competition. We aim to keep these games and use them as fun educational resources for the future.

**Ms Cooney (HE & GCE teacher, MCC)**



# Roadsafe Roadshow

In 2024, 17 individuals tragically lost their lives on the roads in County Donegal, with an additional 55 sustaining serious injuries. So far this year, 10 lives have been lost, and 28 individuals have suffered serious injuries on the roads in the same region.

Recently, 2,700 students from every secondary school in County Donegal participated in the AXA Roadsafe Roadshow, organised in collaboration with Donegal County Council over the past two days.

Notably, young drivers are 85% more likely to be involved in road accidents compared to older drivers, with speed, distraction, and inexperience being the primary causes of these incidents. According to An Garda Síochána, 18,305 fines have been issued for mobile phone use while driving, with 184 of those occurring in County Donegal.

To tackle this critical issue on our roads, AXA, in partnership with Donegal County Council, launched the Roadsafe Roadshow. This impactful and emotional event was held at The Aura Venue in Letterkenny, bringing together 2,700 Transition Year and Fifth Year students from across the county to promote road safety awareness.



**Garda Shaun Tully presents to students**

Six individuals were in the vehicle, travelling at a speed of 120 kph, when it crashed into a wall. Five passengers were ejected through the back window upon impact including Bernadette Rice, who suffered the tragic loss of her twin sister, Clarice, in a road traffic collision in 2019. The AXA Roadsafe Roadshow aims to inspire the next generation of road users to seriously consider the significance of road safety and the consequences of dangerous behaviours, including reckless driving, speeding, substance use, and distractions.

During the launch of the AXA Roadsafe Roadshow in Donegal, Mick Comerford, Retail Direct Director at AXA, remarked, "For young drivers in Donegal, taking the wheel for the first time is a thrilling milestone. However, with newfound independence comes the responsibility to drive safely for themselves and all road users. Our data indicates that young drivers are considerably more likely to be involved in road accidents compared to older drivers. The AXA Roadsafe Roadshow aims to provide young individuals with information about learning to drive, with a candid and unfiltered perspective on how dangerous driving can ruin lives."

John G. McLaughlin, Chief Executive of Donegal County Council, stated, "This impactful and informative Roadshow serves as a vital opportunity to motivate young people to reflect on their roles as drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and cyclists. Speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, dangerous driving, and distractions can have devastating effects on both the driver and other road users. The Roadsafe Roadshow's direct engagement with students emphasises the importance of making safe and responsible choices. I extend my sincerest gratitude to the speakers whose contributions make this event possible."

MCC students were asked to comment on the impact of this event:

Gracie Boyle said "It was very personal. It made me realise that it can truly happen to anyone." Dallan Curran added, "It felt very real since we're all learning to drive now, so it will make us more cautious." Sinead Cavanagh expressed, "The presentation was excellent; it was highly visual," while TJ McNally concluded, "It was quite graphic and difficult to hear about. It delivered a really powerful and memorable message."



In its 17th year, the AXA Roadsafe Roadshow collaborates with Donegal County Council, An Garda Síochána, and emergency services to present a raw and authentic portrayal of the dangers present on our roads. The event features a reenactment of a tragic night out, illustrating the devastating effects of reckless driving, and first-hand accounts from emergency responders who confront the realities of road fatalities. Rachel Elliott, a survivor of a road traffic collision in Bundoran in 2018, experienced the heartbreaking loss of two friends.



**Rachel Elliott talks to students at the Road Safe Show**



**MCC students at the Road Safe Show**

# ETB Debating Forum

Congratulations to our 2nd Year Debating Team who competed in the ETB Junior Debate Cup on Tuesday, November 11th: Aoibhinn McCole, Étaín Devenny, Sarah McLaughlin, Molly McLaughlin, Jessica Boyle, Paddy Barr, and Dara Stewart, who made it through to the Semi-Final of the Annual ETB Debate Competition last week in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Letterkenny. The team were fantastic on the day and achieved joint 3rd place overall. This was a well-deserved result, and we are very proud of their success.



Étaín, Aoibhinn, Paddy

The debating event for Donegal ETB's junior students on Tuesday, 11 November last, saw teams from twelve schools battle it out in the opening quarter-finals. They were the Abbey Vocational School in Donegal Town, Coláiste na Carraige, Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille on Tory Island, Crana College in Buncrana, Coláiste Ailigh and Errigal College in Letterkenny, Deele College in Raphoe, Finn Valley College in Stranorlar, Magh Éne College in Bundoran, Moville Community College, Mulroy College in Milford, and St Catherine's Vocational School in Killybegs.

Donegal ETB's Director of Schools, Dr Martin Gormley, said, "Our Junior Debate Forum event is a great experience for all our students, and those who participated in today's event were well coached and prepared for the debates by their teachers. We were delighted to welcome back some of our retired staff who, along with other ETB staff members, helped to chair and adjudicate during the day. I want to thank them for their support today and also the additional students on each of the adjudication panels who ensured the participation of the student voice."



Aoibhinn, Sarah, Molly

Étaín Devenny told us, "The ETB Debating Forum went extremely well! I would definitely recommend participation to any second-year student. It significantly boosts your confidence, but it requires a lot of time and preparation since you need to know most of your speech by heart." Paddy commented, "The organisation was top class. It truly gave me a big confidence boost. I hope to continue to apply the skills I have developed at some time in the future."



Sarah, Paddy, Jessica

Over seventy students debated for and against a range of motions reflecting the five ethos values of an ETB school: excellence in education, care, equality, community, and respect. The motions included:

*Excellence in Education:* All students would benefit from a four-day academic week.

*Care:* It is more important to care for yourself first before caring for others.

*Equality:* Cultural appropriation should be celebrated, not discouraged.

*Community:* The voting age should be lowered to 16 to ensure that young people have an equal say in the democratic process. Social media has improved human communication.

*Respect:* Individuals who witness bullying without intervening share equal responsibility with the bullies. Donegal ETB's Ethos Coordinator Eamonn Ryan noted, "Donegal ETB's Junior Debate Forum offers a unique opportunity for ETB students across the county to come together and respectfully debate issues of national and local concern through the lens of our Core Values. The quality of the debates from these second-year students was superb. It is heartening to see our teenagers thinking critically and expressing themselves confidently and respectfully on issues that matter to them," he added.

## "Most Impressive Debater" Award



L to R- Eamon Ryan, Anne McHugh, Étaín Devenny and Martin Gormley

We are immensely proud of Étaín Devenny, 2A, who has been honoured with the Chief Executive's Cup for the Most Impressive Debater of the Day at the 2025 Donegal ETB Junior Debate Forum. This outstanding achievement is a well-deserved acknowledgement of Étaín's confidence, clarity, and exceptional debating skills.

# TY Enterprise Day

The event, which made a welcome return after a five-year break, took place on Wednesday, 22 October in the Atlantic Technological University's Letterkenny campus. The day aimed to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship in a fun way to young people with the support of entrepreneurs and business people from across Donegal.

Almost two hundred and thirty students from sixteen schools across the county participated in the event from the Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town; Coláiste Eoghain, Buncrana; Coláiste na Carraige; Crana College, Buncrana; Deele College, Raphoe; Errigal College, Letterkenny; Finn Valley College, Stranorlar; Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Ballinamore; Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, Arranmore Island; Magh Éne College, Bundoran; Moville Community College; Mulroy College, Milford; Pobalscoil na Rosann, Dungloe; St Eunan's College, Letterkenny; St Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs; and St Columba's College, Stranorlar.

Marty O'Reilly, owner of O'Reilly Sports in Ballybofey, was the guest speaker at the event. The former Donegal football player turned entrepreneur, who was a member of the Donegal Senior Football panel that won the 2012 All-Ireland Senior Football Championship Final against Mayo, shared his entrepreneurial experience and valuable tips with the students. MC for the day, Highland Radio's Lee Gooch, kicked the event off with icebreakers, and each team set about developing a product from the materials provided to them.



Cara, Sarah, Ruairi, Joshua, and Eden

Teams were given a business mentor to guide them throughout the day. They were then judged in a Dragon's Den-type setup. This included pitching their product to panels of business judges. The final three teams then pitched to all judges and all participants. Moville CC students demonstrated their creativity and teamwork skills, as they developed a business idea in the team challenge and pitched it to a panel of judges in a Dragon's Den-style competition.

Speaking about the Enterprise Day, Donegal ETB Director of Schools Dr Martin Gormley commented, "We're really pleased in Donegal ETB to have brought back this wonderful event. It was fantastic to see so many schools joining us. The students found the day enjoyable, and hopefully, it will help to inspire some innovation and creativity among them. We are grateful to ATU for the use of their facilities. The keynote address from Marty O'Reilly also resonated with the student body, and all the employers contributed so well as business mentors. The young students present entered into the spirit of the day, and all the teachers involved were very proud of their contribution," he added.



All MCC participants

Abi McLaughlin told us: "The day started with some fun warm-up games to get everyone ready and excited. After that, every team was given some random objects such as paper plates, lollipop sticks, buttons, and string, etc., and then from that, each team had to come up with a product of their own to make into a business idea. Each team was also given a business mentor, a person who had previously been involved in a business or a company, to help each team to some extent with their ideas. Every team was given one hour to come up with their ideas and assign each team member a role for when they were presenting their idea to the judges. Once the hour was up, there were some more fun games before the teams had to go in and pitch their ideas to the judges."

"The teams' presentations had to be at least three minutes or more, and they had to demonstrate how their product worked. After this, the judges got together to decide on their top three ideas, and those top three would then all pitch their ideas again to decide on a first, second, and third place. Unfortunately, neither of our teams made it to the final three despite their amazing ideas. After this, both Moville teams had to travel home early to be home in time for the buses. All the students who attended said they enjoyed the day very much and that they all learned new things and found all the knowledge the business mentors shared with them very interesting. Overall, it was a great day out and a learning experience for our TYs."



Emer, Fódhla, Abi, Charlie, Oisín, and Evan

# EU Public Speaking Competition



**All TY Public Speakers**

The Central Library in Letterkenny was packed to capacity on Friday 7th November for the regional final of the 2025 Europe Direct Soapbox Public Speaking competition. There were 37 contestants from schools across Donegal and the standard was just brilliant so well done to everyone for taking part in the competition. The topic for debate this year was, “Is it time the EU banned social media for under 16’s?” Pupils had three minutes to argue for or against the motion and some very lively presentations were heard.

The winners, were: Cassie Lambe from Loreto Letterkenny (Winner in the 16 and under category) and Nikolas Govka from Crana College (Winner in the 17 and over category) who both received an Apple iPad. Cassie and Nikolas will now go forward to represent Donegal in the National Final of the Europe Direct Soapbox Public Speaking in Dublin on 1st December. Well done to the runners up for their excellent presentations (Annabel Breslin, 2nd place 16 and under, Olan Doogan-Bellec, 3rd place 16 and under, Conor McShane, 2nd place 17 and over and Sarah McHugh and Riley Doherty, joint 3rd place in the 17 and over category)



**Teddy Friel**



**Lily McDaid**



**All winners and judges**

MCC’s very impressive speakers included Euan Stewart, Teddy Friel, Fódhla McGinley, Lily McDaid, and Rhéa McLaughlin. Euan Stewart described the event as “A great night of discourse and discussion. It helped everyone in attendance, including myself, grow in confidence in opinion writing and public speaking.”

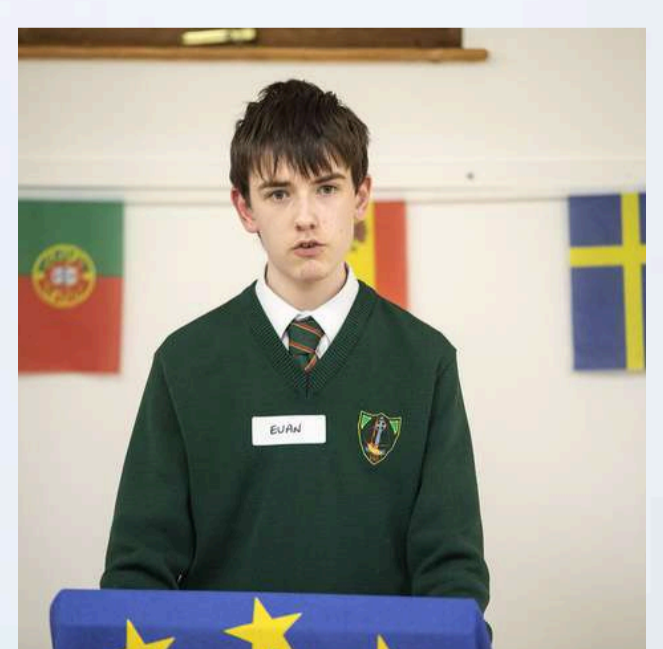
Lily McDaid commented: “I had a great experience at the Soapbox Speech Competition. I thought writing the speech would come easily to me, but it was very difficult to come up with a concrete opinion. Then, practising how I would deliver the speech was harder than I had anticipated. I could never make it the right length of time for the competition—which was three minutes. I underestimated how amazing all of the speeches there would be. They were powerful, emotional, and I genuinely felt intimidated to be competing against them. I’ve learned so much from doing Soapbox about how to deliver a speech and how to captivate an audience.”



**Fódhla McGinley**



**Rhéa McLaughlin**



**Euan Stewart**

# Garda Work Experience

Transition Year students from Carndonagh Community School and Merville Community College took part in a four-day work experience programme at Buncrana Garda Station during the last week of October. During this time, the students learned about the workings of An Garda Síochána and about the various sections within it. They had a visit from the Armed Support Unit and also the Scenes of Crime Unit, which they found to be very informative. They received talks from the DPSU and Detectives about their work, and they also received presentations in relation to the custody regulations and the stinger training. The 'use of force' and public order demonstration proved very popular with the students. They paid a visit to Buncrana District Court and also to Letterkenny Garda Station, where they met Chief Superintendent Goretta Sheridan, who told them about her pathway to her Chief Superintendent role within An Garda Síochána.



**Eve poses with Garda Motorcycle Unit Officer**

Participant Eve Cavanagh expressed, “It was an extraordinary experience. I found it captivating to witness how those who protect us function on a day-to-day basis. At first, I thought it might be somewhat boring, but it was far from that. It opened my eyes to the many opportunities available within the Gardaí. You can opt to work behind the scenes or directly alongside them. We also gained valuable insights into the legal profession. We are very grateful to everyone who made it possible for us to gain first-hand experience of the crucial work carried out by our Gardaí every single day.”



**All Garda work experience participants**



**Public Order Training**

Ruairi Lynch also said: “From the 20th to the 24th, I participated in a week of work experience with An Garda Síochána in Buncrana. On the first day, we met at the station and went into the meeting room where we talked to Garda Peter McGee and Garda Sean Tully. They explained what we would be doing for the rest of the week, and later on, we went out and looked at the cars and motorcycles.

We were guided around the station and shown the cells and the breathalyser machine. On the second day, an officer from the Special Armed Forces (SAF) came in and described what he did, the training he had to undergo, and answered any questions. He then showed us how to check if there is a bullet in a 9 mm handgun, and then a submachine gun. We went outside when he was leaving, and he showed us the “battering ram” before he left. These tools are deployed by trained officers, sometimes armed units, to ensure swift entry into premises in high-risk situations. The forensic department representatives came in after lunch and told us about their work. They then gave us metal dust to get the fingerprints from the table and plates using tape.

On day three, we went outside to practise throwing a stinger on the ground. Shortly after, we went to a back road and had to run across the road, set it up, then pull it across as the Garda car came towards us. I found this process very interesting, and it helped me get a real feel for the job.

On the last day, we took a minibus to the Letterkenny Garda station and met with the Sergeant, who gave us each a certificate and congratulated us. Overall, I enjoyed this experience very much, and I have learned all about the process of becoming a Garda, which will enable me to hopefully fulfil my future career ambitions”.



# Poetry Aloud Finals

Congratulations to Muireann Doyle for her fantastic performance in this prestigious competition on Friday, December 12th, as well as to all the participants who demonstrated their literary talents. It was such a privilege to view such gifted students compete on a national stage. Many thanks to Poetry Ireland, The National Library of Ireland, University College Cork, along with Tony Curtis and Niall McMonagle for sharing their wisdom, poetry, and songs.



Muireann receives her award from Dr Audrey Whitty

Since it was launched in 2006, Poetry Aloud has grown from just a few hundred entries to almost 2,000 entries in 2017. The late Seamus Heaney was a significant supporter of Poetry Aloud. When he won the David Cohen Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Literature, he nominated Poetry Aloud for the accompanying Clarissa Luard Award, and he remarked, “I truly believe Poetry Aloud deserves all the support it can get, because it promotes literature, and, in particular, poetry, widely, intimately and to inestimable effect. But fundamentally, I choose it because it brings poetry into the memory and affections of the young in a way that will make it a lifelong possession and value.” The competition is open to all students attending a second-level school on the island of Ireland. Poetry Aloud celebrates the joy of speaking and listening to poetry among post-primary students on the island of Ireland. Poetry Aloud engages students with spoken poetry, building confidence and pride in our written heritage. Participants from three categories (Junior, Intermediate and Senior) learn one prescribed poem and one poem of their choosing from selected anthologies and compete at regional heats, semi-finals and the national final in the National Library of Ireland. Past participants in Poetry Aloud, who are included in recorded pieces reading letters and poems in the library’s exhibitions, have participated in commemorative events in the NLI and events organised by Poetry Ireland, and have gone on to pursue careers in acting and become published poets. Poetry Ireland described it as: “A truly inspiring day listening to finalists of Poetry Aloud 2025! Congratulations to our winners, runners-up and all those who took part in the competition. The future of poetry is bright indeed!”

Muireann said, “Ms Browne entered me in the Intermediate Category, preliminary round, where I was recorded reciting the poem ‘The Laying Hen’ by Rosamund Taylor. A few weeks later, we received the exciting news that I had advanced to the semi-finals, which were held at the National Library of Ireland. For this stage, I needed to recite two poems—one prescribed and one of my choosing. The prescribed poem was ‘Among Treetops’ by Alvy Carragher, while I selected ‘Limbo’ by Seamus Heaney. I was thrilled to progress to the finals. The entire experience was both rewarding and enlightening. I would highly recommend this competition to anyone interested in poetry or the spoken word.”



All Poetry Aloud Finalists 2025

# Senior Art Trip to Sligo

As part of their preparation for the Leaving Certificate Art History exam, the Senior Cycle Art students of MCC visited The Model Art Gallery in Sligo, where they saw three separate exhibitions, including “A Painted Universe” by Jack B. Yeats. They were also able to fit in a visit to the Stone Age Court Cairn in Creevyveel, County Sligo. Visiting art galleries is a valued and essential part of any art student's process. Keeping up to date with both contemporary and historical art practices is a pivotal part of any artist's life. Understanding the process for each of these artists in their separate exhibitions and how they visualised and realised their own unique interpretation of the theme that was given to them will hopefully have a lasting effect on each of the MCC art students.

Jack Butler Yeats (1871–1957) is one of Ireland's most celebrated twentieth-century artists. The Niland Collection, housed at The Model, holds an extensive body of his work spanning the full arc of his career—from early pen-and-ink illustrations and lively watercolours to the expressive oil paintings that define his mature style. Yeats belonged to one of Ireland's most remarkable artistic families. His father, John Butler Yeats (1839–1922), was a portrait painter, while his siblings—William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), Susan Mary Yeats (1866–1949), and Elizabeth Corbet Yeats (1868–1940)—were all distinguished figures in literature, art, and publishing. Unlike them, Jack spent his childhood in Sligo with his maternal grandparents, Elizabeth and William Pollexfen. The vivid life of the town and its people left a deep and lasting impression on him.



Jack B Yeats paintings

Throughout his career, Yeats returned to the people and scenes of his youth – the sailor, the clown, the traveller and the balladeer, amongst others. Over time, these subjects came to embody universal human experience in his work. His shift to oil painting from 1910 onwards marked a turning point. The early oils, grounded in realism, depict ordinary lives and the social and political world of early twentieth-century Ireland. From the mid-1920s, however, his art grew increasingly expressive and symbolic, as this paintings became a means to convey emotion and transcendence. In his later works, charged with pathos and intensity, familiar figures take on a metaphysical dimension, revealing Yeats's lifelong quest to paint not only the world he saw, but the inner universe he felt. A Painted Universe invites visitors to encounter these presences and step into Yeats's artistic world, where memory, emotion and experience are transformed into colour, form and light.



MCC Senior Students at the Model Art Gallery

## CREEVYKEEL COURT TOMB

Creevykeel Court Tomb is located 2 km north-east of Cliffony, Co. Sligo, and is the largest and finest example of a court tomb in Ireland. One of five megalithic monuments in the area, this court tomb is also known as a court cairn. It dates between 4000 and 2500 BC, the Neolithic period, with Early Christian usage located to the north-west. The cairn of stones is trapezoidal. The internal oval court, entered via an entrance passage, measures 15 m long by 9 m wide. The largest of the internal court stones flanks the entrance to the main chamber within. The main chamber, originally corbelled and roofed with a roof stone, is divided into two. Creevykeel was excavated in 1935 under Hugh O'Neill Hencken. The excavation removed the cairn completely and replaced all the stones after excavation. The excavation showed that the stones used were local grey sandstone, with the cairn surrounded by a stone revetment (a protective measure). The tomb was found to have had cobblestone flooring. A polished diorite axe was part of the finds, along with pots, quartz crystals, a flint knife, and a lozenge-shaped arrowhead. Animal bones found included sheep, pig, and ox, with fish and periwinkles also unearthed.



Creevykeel Court Tomb

When we arrived at the Creevykeel Court Tomb we were instantly taken in by the scenery. It was so perfect and there was truly no explanation needed. We then visited the Model Gallery, which was a bit confusing at first. However, after our tour guide explained the meanings and history of the art pieces it enlightened me and made me look at the unique art pieces in a different light. Engaging with the artworks at the Model Gallery and the site at Creevykeel made me consider how much art can be influenced by real-world issues and current affairs. It really helped my understanding of art, history and place. For example, there was an exhibition in which they played audio from near-forgotten languages to raise awareness. The most memorable moment was the first exhibit with the spool that looked like it was tangled with normal string but then the tour guide revealed it to be a mother and daughter's hair. This was really interesting and made the art piece so much more meaningful. This trip definitely gave me ideas for my Leaving Cert Art booklet as most of the pieces showed how to tie in current events and relevant information. It also showed how important family is through different exhibits.

By Oisín McClafferty



# MCC Carol Service



## MCC CAROL SERVICE 2025- MS E HEGARTY

When I started in Merville in 2002, I was excited to have the opportunity to lead a Christmas Carol Service for the first time. At that stage, there were only 1st- and 2nd-year students in the school. The service was very modest: a small group of music students singing, maybe two guitars, one microphone and a speaker. I played piano and conducted. It took place in the GP Hall during class time, with only students and staff in attendance.

From the very beginning, the support from school management—Mr Doogan, Mr Newton, Mr Ryan, and now Ms Doherty, Mr Hegarty and Ms Donaghy, as well as the entire school staff—has been unreal. In 2006, the Carol Service moved to the chapel, which was a significant step. At that stage, I travelled to Reynolds in Raphoe to load up the car with extra microphones and speakers, relying on students to help set everything up. It was still a daytime event, attended only by the school community. The following year, we changed it to an evening event and extended an open invitation to the whole community to join us.

To think that it has grown from those beginnings into the massive production it has now become is incredible. Musically, my most transformative memories are when Ms Cavanagh joined the school and when Mr Doherty added the guitar orchestra. It now takes two music teachers to coordinate the event, along with the continued support of school management and the entire school staff. We have a list of 19 categories of "staff jobs". Some staff take on the same roles every year and other staff say, "Put my name down for whatever..." We appreciate this level of support so much. We are so blessed. With up to 130 students involved, the professional assistance of Seamus Devenny on drums/percussion, Neil McGrory on sound, and the support of our wider community is also absolutely amazing. Every year it feels like "this is the best Carol Service ever." I absolutely loved being involved again this year; the students are amazing, and every single rehearsal was so enjoyable. This year we literally had over 100 students turn up for the after-school Carol Service practice. This shows what a unique group of students we have in this school.

My number one standout moment has to be the first time we sang a Lámh song. Another favourite memory is Ms Ward's poem that was read at this year's Carol Service. She captured so eloquently how special and unique the event is and exactly what it means to us all. In 2024, Ms Cavanagh led the way, and I had the opportunity to sit in the audience. I was in awe of the entire experience. It was a real gift to step back and admire and appreciate it all. I also have to mention the first year that Santa and the elves made an appearance!

Carol Service traditions include "O Holy Night," always introducing something new each year, changing things up, and the pre-show pizza at Rosato's. The Carol Service is deeply meaningful to many people. A lot of people in the community tell me that it marks the start of Christmas for them. The service is free for everyone to attend, and it provides an opportunity to pause, reflect, and celebrate together.

On a personal level, it has been both an honour and a privilege to be part of this journey and to see the Carol Service evolve over the years. It is a very unique opportunity for students to perform as part of such a large group and in front of an audience of over 1,000 people. I hope students will remember it as a time of joy, celebration, and fun, and that they will cherish those memories for a lifetime. Above all, I want them to know how special they are and what a special gift they provide to everyone who attends.

## MCC CAROL SERVICE 2025- MS G CAVANAGH

Ms G Cavanagh has been coordinating the Carol Service for the past ten years. She told us: "This year's Carol Service was held on Wednesday, December 10th. It was a truly wonderful evening, with the theme "A Christmas Wish" beautifully uniting the event. The band created an amazing atmosphere with their fantastic music, while the impressive choir of 120 students delivered an incredible performance of the set list. The decorations, all perfectly crafted by talented TY art students, were a standout feature, infusing the chapel with warmth and holiday spirit. It was a fabulous evening that effectively commenced the Christmas season for our community. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this event such a success. We spoke to Fianna McCool about her experience of participating in her very last MCC Carol Service and we also spoke to Ms E Hegarty about her role as Coordinator of the MCC Carol Service for the past 24 years.



In St Pius X Chapel

## FIANNA MCCOOL- 6TH YEAR SOLOIST

"During this year's carol service, I had the opportunity to be both a soloist and an accompanist. My favourite moment was singing 'O Holy Night' for the first time alone, which truly pushed me out of my comfort zone.

Each year, there is a special song featuring Lámh sign that Ms Cavanagh and Ms Hegarty teach to the choir students, allowing some of the students with additional needs to participate. "The 'Lámh Sign' performance holds a special place in my heart, as it provides these students with an opportunity they might not receive elsewhere. One of my favourite memories of the Carol Service comes from the rehearsals with Seamus Devenny; he always infused our practices with renewed energy.

This year, I believe the guitars blended beautifully together, and the larger number of guitarists made their music particularly effective. I take great pride in the piano pieces I performed, as they were quite intricate and necessitated hours of dedicated practice. It was challenging to ensure that I was fully prepared for my performances, especially under time constraints.

I want to extend my gratitude to Ms Cavanagh and Ms Hegarty for their unwavering support, not just this year but over the past several years. They consistently work hard to make the performance truly magical and memorable. Performing this year felt more emotional, knowing it would be my last. I will truly miss Christmas at MCC when I head off to college next year."



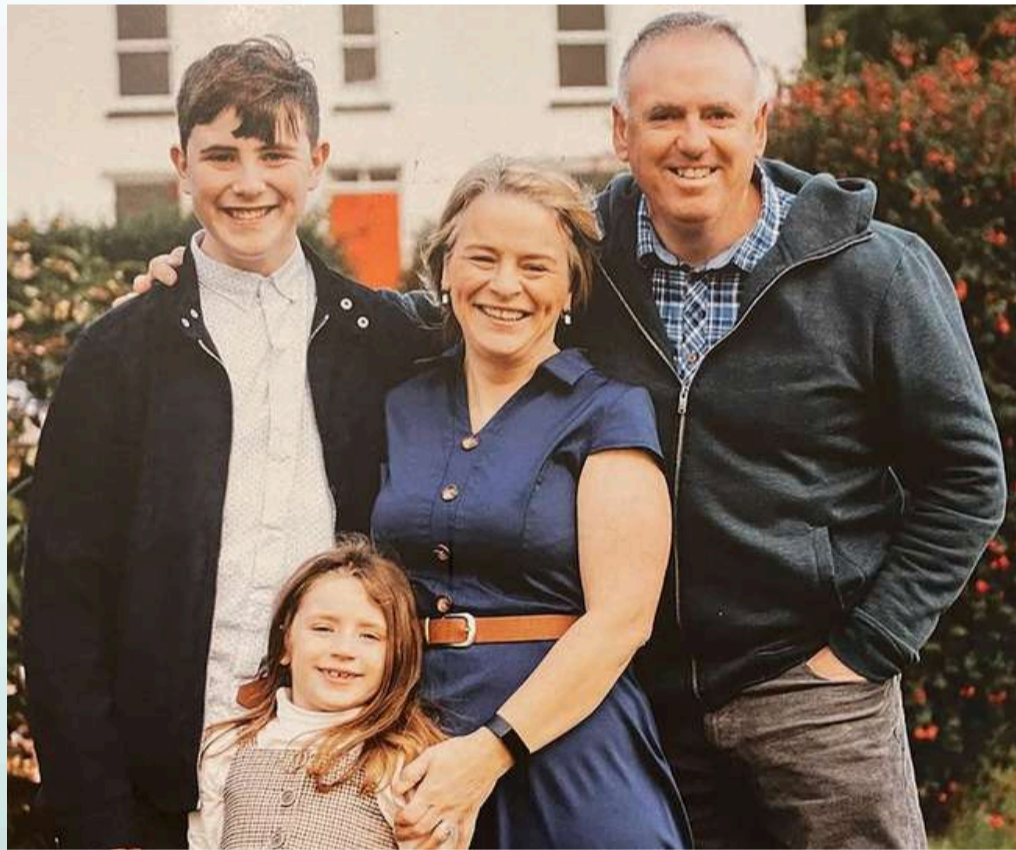


# Geraldine's Mount Fansipan Trek

Moville woman Geraldine Mullan has revealed she's preparing to take on another international challenge in honour of her beloved family. Geraldine tragically lost her husband John and their two children, Tomás and Amelia, in an accident in Inishowen in 2020. In the years since, Geraldine has dedicated herself to helping others in their memory through charity fundraising and her work with the Mullan Hope Centre in Moville. This year, Geraldine will be marking what would have been her beloved son Tomás's 20th birthday by taking part in a charity trek in Vietnam. Geraldine's challenge will be in aid of Derry-based charity Children in Crossfire and will include a climb up Fansipan Mountain, the highest peak in the country.

"The dates of this trek hold a very special significance for me," Geraldine explained. "On 10th April 2026, my son Tomás should be turning 20. Tragically, I lost my beloved husband John, my son Tomás, and my daughter Amelia on 20th August 2020. Much of the charity work I do is in their memory, and this trek will be no different. Climbing Fansipan during the week of my son's birthday feels like a deeply personal way to honour him — to turn grief into purpose, and to support children and families who need it most. Every step I take on this journey will be for Tomás, for John, for Amelia, and for the children whose lives are being changed through this incredible charity."

Geraldine first became connected with Children in Crossfire through the Mullan Hope Centre, where she had the opportunity to meet the charity's founder, Richard Moore, and learn more about its work supporting some of the world's most vulnerable children. In 2024, Geraldine organised a 5km fun run/walk for what would have been Tomás's 18th birthday.



**The Mullan Family**



**Mount Fansipan, Vietnam**



**Mount Fansipan**

The following year, Geraldine undertook her most ambitious challenge to date, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to mark her own 50th birthday, raising €32,500 for Children in Crossfire. The African challenge was also dedicated to her beloved mother, Margaret, who passed away last February.

The charity has become a cause that is very close to Geraldine's heart. Geraldine said it has been a privilege to work directly with the charity thus far, raising money for projects in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma.

"I was able to see first-hand the life-changing work they do with children and families living in extreme poverty," she said. "The impact they make is real, lasting, and deeply inspiring — and it's why I'm committed to supporting them again this year. The funds raised from this trek will once again go towards Children in Crossfire's vital projects in Tanzania, helping to improve healthcare, nutrition, education, and protection for vulnerable children."

Geraldine invites anyone to donate, regardless of the amount, and help Children in Crossfire continue their essential work keeping hope alive for many children. "If you can't donate, sharing this page would mean just as much," she said on her fundraiser homepage.

If you would like to donate please use this link: : <https://www.justgiving.com/page/children-in-crossfire-geraldinesvietnamtrek>



**Children  
in Crossfire**

# TYs Take on The Irish Times

By Eve Cavanagh



MCC Young Journalists visit The Irish Times, Tara Street, Dublin

On Wednesday the 21st of January, Mrs Browne took me and a dozen other TY students to visit the Irish Times office in Dublin. It was an early enough start; we all met at the school at half past seven in the morning and piled into the minibus. Despite the long journey ahead of us, we were all buzzing with excitement.

When we reached Dublin, we had about an hour before we toured the office, so we decided we'd hit Grafton Street. On our way, we passed the Trinity College campus and, more importantly, the Normal People mural. The grounds were a breath of fresh air in the congested business of the capital city. A little mooch around some shops and a coffee from Bewley's, and then by the time it had stopped raining and blowing a gale, it was time to head back to Tara Street.

Upon arrival, we pinned on our visitor's badges and took the lift to the fourth floor of the building in time for the 2 o'clock news conference. Before long, the round table in the centre of the room was filled. It was such an honour to have front row seats at the inner workings of one of Ireland's largest and most successful newspapers. I was fascinated by the system in place; each department played a crucial role, and they all worked seamlessly together. We heard from Killian Doyle about the online newsdesk as well as the Irish Times Podcast editor. They then discussed the following day's main headlines, such as the tragic train crash in Spain, the closure of Newbridge in Kildare, and Donald Trump and his views on Greenland getting many mentions.

The analytics team displayed the most and least popular news stories, which provides them with a better understanding of their audience's reading patterns. This allowed them to push the more successful stories on the website and scrap the more unremarkable ones. They adjusted the manufacturing of printed issues depending on how many they predicted would be sold. This may be down to a big match, "trigger headlines" or simply the day of the week. It was almost like a weather forecast. Every detail was taken into account to achieve the most profitable sales.

Irish Times editor Ruadhán Mac Cormaic kindly stayed back after the conference and answered many of our questions. We talked about how news companies cater for young people when publishing, and Ruadhán enlightened us on how his passion for journalism started while working on his college newspaper.

The Q&A was followed by a guided tour led by the very entertaining Michael Ruane. We were shown around each department and then got to speak with Anne Hayden, who taught us how the pages are laid out.

The most interesting part of the visit for me was learning how a huge newspaper company is adapting to the digital world. You would expect that the print decline would greatly affect a newspaper company's growth. There is a substantial decline in sales of physical newspapers, but The Irish Times has switched focus to its website, which is now the company's main priority and breadwinner.

It was certainly a day to remember and I hope that one day, if I am lucky enough fulfil my personal ambitions, I will be participating in my very own news conference as a fully-fledged, national journalist.

Ms Browne remarked that this visit was one of the highlights of her teaching career: "I have been reading The Irish Times for over 30 years now and to be offered the opportunity to visit the head office and view a live news conference and meet so many eminent journalists was an absolute privilege. To share this with my students was most certainly the icing on the cake".

We would all like to extend our gratitude to Newsbrands Ireland, particularly Lisa Buckley and Anne Marie Lenihan, as well as the entire team at The Irish Times for their warmth and generosity during this truly unforgettable experience.

**THE IRISH TIMES**

YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ



# Ms Mc Dermott Meets The Stars

Ms McDermott, an Irish and English teacher in our school, recently got the opportunity to meet the crew of Dancing with the Stars. She received the invitation from one of her close friends to be in the audience during this special night. We asked her some questions about the night and she shared her insights.

“It was such an interesting and fun experience from meeting the dancers to the judges as well as the presenters. Watching Dancing with the Stars live offers a very different perspective from seeing it on television. It reveals the scale, the precision, and the teamwork behind the scenes of one of RTÉ's biggest entertainment shows. The audience members were called to the studio hours before the actual show started. This allowed time for costume and lighting checks as well as adjusting where audience members were sitting. It was a themed night, so there were plenty of western-looking people walking around. It was also surprising to see just how high-tech the setup was. The presenters read from teleprompters which were placed in front of the cameras; this allowed them to speak directly to the viewers whilst also following the script.

When watching from home, you might think the show is completely live. But actually, the professional dancers' group performance is pre-recorded to ensure perfect camera angles and lighting. During the ad breaks, the judges and presenters handed out sweets and chatted to the audience members. Before the show even began, comedian James Patrice warmed the audience up by pulling random people from the crowd for light-hearted challenges and jokes.

The atmosphere in the studio was electric; the audience members were encouraged to clap, cheer, or boo at the judges' comments and also to give every performance a standing ovation. Ultimately, it was just as exciting as it is on TV, but seeing the sheer scale of the operation and the army of people working behind the scenes made it even more impressive.



Brian Redmond isn't as scary as he seems!

Meeting the contestants in person was such a highlight. While some personalities can appear intimidating on screen, in reality they were so nice and far more down to earth than expected. Even the judges, including Karen Byrne and Brian Redmond, were warm and friendly off camera.

Performance-wise, Eric Roberts drew particular praise because on that night he stepped out of his comfort zone by embracing the challenge. However, Philip Doyle and Danielle Roze's theatrical routine left a lasting impression as their dance was clean and showcased storytelling throughout. Watching live makes small mistakes more noticeable, whereas viewers watching from home can sometimes miss them because of the camera angles.

One unforgettable moment was definitely the professional group dance. The props they used fully transformed the set. The routine showcased the extraordinary skills of the show's professional dancers, and the dance drew huge applause from the crowd.

Beyond the performances, the evening also offered an insight into many different careers behind live television; the scale of opportunity within the industry is phenomenal.

The experience was not just entertaining, but inspiring. For anyone curious about television or film production, attending a TV production like Dancing with the Stars offers a rare glimpse into the precision, creativity, and teamwork that bring the magic to life.



Watching the stage being set up for Country Week

# Pope John Paul Awards



MCC award recipients with Mr Tom McCabe, Ms Kay Ward and Bishop McKeown. Absent from photo Maia McDermott

Congratulations to our 12 senior students who received their Pope John Paul Awards this year. Gold Award recipients: Tanya Cavanagh, Ellie Cavanagh, Emma Messenger, Sinead Cavanagh, Orlagh McLaughlin, Joshua Mackey, Cian Lake, Alicia Atherton, Rory McIlhinney, Oonagh McIvor and Maia Ms Dermott.

Additionally, two Sixth-Year students, Daithí Clerkin and Luke Doherty, earned the prestigious Papal Cross Award, which represents the highest level of achievement. Over 400 young people were honoured at the 19th Annual Pope John Paul II Award Ceremony held in Saint Eugene's Cathedral on Wednesday January 28th. The keynote address was given by the Patron of the Pope John Paul II Award, Most Reverend Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry.

Bishop McKeown presented the Award to 419 young people from all over the diocese of Derry and beyond. This year 16 people received the Papal Cross Award. These young people came from 21 second-level schools across the Diocese, and represented 46 parishes in the Diocese of Derry and 14 parishes outside the Diocese.

Bishop McKeown thanked the young people present for their "generous hearts" in engaging with the Award, through which young people are actively involved in their parish, school and local community, develop their faith and understand more fully the very important role they have in the Church.

Bishop McKeown said they had shown that, "they dared to believe in beauty, dared to look at their faith and at Jesus and to believe that we can expect better". He reminded them of Pope John Paul II's call to young people to be great and to do great things. He called on them to be encouraged by, "the other young people who are here, that on their own they could do amazing things, but with others, God can do miracles."

The award was founded and created by Fr Paul Farren, Diocese of Derry and has developed over the years with the support of the Pope John Paul II Award Committee, Diocesan Youth Team, schools and parishes. It was launched in Derry in 2006 by the then Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Lazarotto. In the last 19 years the Award has been introduced in 24 dioceses in Ireland and supported by the international coordinator, Mr Tony Brennan, has also been introduced in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle in England.

The Pope John Paul II Award continues to be the largest youth movement in the church in Ireland. Since the Award began approximately 50,500 young people have enrolled nationwide. Within the Diocese of Derry, a total of 7,474 young people have achieved the Award since its inception. Thank you to Mr Tom McCabe for coordinating this programme and to Ms Ward for being their hardworking mentor.

## Mr McCabe, Pope JP Award Coordinator

Mr Tom McCabe told the TY news team: "I have been involved since the start of the award nineteen years ago. We were one of the first schools to get involved in it, and the first student ever to complete the award was from Moville Community College. Moville was also the first school to have students who are not of the Catholic faith and not of the Christian faith to complete the award, and that has been commented to me by teachers in other schools about how positive it is and how big a step forward it is. It embraces the ethos of the school because all religions are different but equal. I started the award in the school because I am a religion teacher and I was invited to a meeting about it. I think the pursuit of this award is a great idea because it suits students who may not be involved in sports, and it gives them something that they can achieve and get recognition for. I think it also encourages students to get involved with their local community and to get involved in their parish."

## Luke Doherty, Papal Cross Recipient

The Pope John Paul II Award is designed for young people and entails completing a specified number of community and parish hours. For instance, volunteering at a local youth group counts towards community hours, while assisting with collections at mass contributes to parish hours. I have earned the Papal Cross Award, the highest level available, after completing the gold award in Transition Year, which I found to be a rewarding experience.

I began my Papal Cross Award journey early in my fifth year, just over a year ago. To fulfil my community hours, I participated in litter picking with the Tidy Towns initiative. For my parish hours, I distributed bulletins during mass, performed readings, and contributed articles to the NET newsletter. Additionally, I organised a talk about St. Carlo Acutis, which proved to be the most challenging and time-consuming aspect of my involvement.

Among my activities, I particularly enjoyed litter picking as it has a visible impact on the local community, aligning with my passion for environmental care. I take pride in my contribution, especially since Moville won a gold medal in 2025 at Tidy Towns, and I feel fortunate to have played a small role in that achievement. Reading at mass has greatly enhanced my confidence and public speaking abilities, and organising the talk also contributed to the development of these skills, alongside improving my communication and organisational capabilities. I think the award is a fantastic experience for young people. I am very passionate about youth empowerment, and the Pope John Paul II Award does just that, showing people just how much of a difference they can make in their community and parish.

I would like to thank Daithí Chlerkin for making the video we showed on the evening, Luke Murphy for his talk, Fr Colm for his support, Roseann for helping organise everything, Liam McDermott for allowing us to use the hall, Cathy Gibson for helping set up and providing the audiovisual equipment, Helen the Parish Secretary for printing and copying the posters, Gary and the Rosary Group for moving their time to accommodate us, the Parish Pastoral Council for help with refreshments and the other Pope John Paul awardees for managing the doors.

## Daithí Clerkin, Papal Cross Recipient

"The Papal Cross Award is the highest level of this award, as far as I know. It's a big commitment, and the dedication it takes is the most challenging part of earning these awards. I was working towards completing this for two years. I did 20 weeks for Pope John Paul II and a further 26 weeks for the Papal Cross. I've been doing my work in my church, handing out bulletins and being part of the general welcoming committee, and also in St. Vincent de Paul where I would mostly collect furniture that I would then fix up, sell, and deliver. I learned valuable skills like woodworking and communication. I would



Daithí receives his Papal Cross award

I definitely recommend this to any student; it can really help you to step out of your comfort zone and develop more confidence, as you have to interact with more people than you usually would. It can be hard work, but seeing the positive impact it makes is so rewarding. I feel like the work I did for SVDP really helped the community, as I got to provide a service for those in need.



All Papal Cross recipients

# "A New Home for Learning"

By Carra Crumlish and Naoise Davenport

After a long wait, a new chapter begins at Merville Community College as we welcome the arrival of our new building. This will be a major and most welcome change for the teachers, students, and everyone involved in the school community.

There are some teachers still in the school who have been here since the beginning. We interviewed a few of them to get their point of view on this new beginning. We spoke with Mrs Browne about some of her best memories, what she enjoys about being a teacher, and what her feelings are about the school's bright future.

"We started in the lower building in 2001 with fewer than 100 students. Mr Doogan was the Principal, and his office was in the Serenity House in Merville town. The uniform was designed by students, and these uniforms are still worn to this day," she said.

"A highlight of my teaching career has definitely been our school's involvement and success in the PressPass TY news literacy programme. This programme culminates in a competition at the end of a module which is circulated to participating schools in January each year. In this time, we have received a total of 13 awards. The first one was in 2018 when Eoin O'Doherty won second prize for his sports article about a home team derby match against Lifford in a thrilling 10-goal Junior Cup final. His success, combined with my natural interest in journalism, inspired me to continue with the programme, which I feel is of huge benefit to all my students, not just the individual and group winners."

"Another highlight of my teaching career was when Leaving Cert poet Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin kindly accepted my offer to come to our school to view our students' artwork. This was a brilliant learning opportunity for our senior students as she explained the complexities of her work to them in an informative presentation in Room 107. Her visit did not go exactly as planned because on her way here, her car broke down in Omagh, but Mr Doogan immediately drove down and picked her up from the side of the A25!" she recalled.

"The relationships I have formed with our students and teachers definitely make my job special; the students are respectful, helpful, and fun to work with.

"Moving to the new building is very exciting. We have been waiting patiently for it for so many years. I often feel bad for the students who have had nowhere to eat their lunches, so the new canteen will make a huge difference. Many teachers have to share classrooms too, and some move from class to class every day; this includes going from the upper to the lower, so it is great for everyone overall, and we are very grateful to everyone who made this possible," she concluded.



Ms Browne, Ms O'Brien, Mr Ryan, Mr Doogan, Mr Newton, Mr Sweeney, Ms Mulhall and Ms Devenny

We then spoke to Mrs O'Brien and asked her to discuss her memories, what she likes about her profession and her hopes going forward. "At the beginning, it was very different. We only had eight rooms and around 95 students, and they were only first years, so there is a big difference from then to now with a lot more students and the upper building," she said. "We had a show called Joseph and his amazing technicoloured coat; I will always remember this because all the teachers were involved and Mr Doogan, who was our old Principal, dressed up and danced to a song. It was so great to watch and everyone enjoyed it."

"Working with the parents, students, and teachers definitely makes my job enjoyable; providing education to set pupils up in life makes me happy to do it," she added.

While it's clear that Mrs O'Brien has happy recollections of the old building, she is filled with optimism as we all look forward.

"I can't wait to have a look at it and see what it's all about. It will be a big difference and take a while to get used to for everyone, but once we are used to it, it will be great. Of course, I will miss the lower building as it has been here since the beginning and we have formed a lot of memories of it."

## "It all began on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2000"

Lastly, we interviewed former Principal, Mr Doogan, as he played a vital part in getting the school to where it is today, even though that story began over 25 years ago. "It all began on the 13th of December 2000 when I was interviewed to be the principal of a school that had not yet been built; nor did it have any students or any teachers.

"As soon as I found out I got the job, straight away, I was looking for people to work for me in a non-existent school. I had to convince people that it would be a good idea. Then on Monday - the 18th of January - I started work in the Serenity Office. During this time, I had to get together students and teachers and find the perfect land for the school building. It was a very difficult time as foot-and-mouth disease was going around.

"Eventually, we got the planning permission accepted on the 25th of June and on the 26th, I bought the site, and on the 27th, we began to build; it was all very abrupt. In 2001, the school began. We had only four classes who were all in their first year. We knew from the start how to run the school to prepare for the year we had next.

"The staff had a high level of enthusiasm which was very well needed and helped a lot. In the year 2005, we had the first-ever Leaving Cert take place in our school. The uniform that we still wear today was designed by some of our very first students, Amanda and Daragh, who created the crest. If you look at the crest closely, you will see the Cooley Cross, the sea, a boat, and someone fishing. I wanted to make sure that I facilitated all the main sports, and I was determined to have a wide variety on offer.



Daragh Henty and Amanda McLaughlin 2001

## "The school was a lot different and smaller back then"

We then spoke with Mrs Mulhall about her personal experiences at the school. "I was here from the beginning with a few other teachers who are still here. The school was a lot different and a lot smaller back then. We started with the lower building, which I am still in now, and even some of the students I taught are now teachers here too."

We also asked her to tell us about some of the best memories that stood out the most for her. "There are a lot of good memories I have from the school. I coach the girls' football team and we have got to a few All-Ireland finals and did very well to get to them. Even though the outcome wasn't always what we wanted, I will always remember the year 2019 when the senior girls played in the FAI national cup final against Athlone. The game was in Sligo and we won. The atmosphere was amazing and the celebrations lasted well over a few days."

"The relationships I form with the people definitely help. The people in the school have a very high standard and a good understanding of respect, which makes the environment very nice to be in," she added.

"We have been waiting for a long twenty-four years, so it is well overdue. We will be very happy to have things like our own classroom, a canteen, and better supplies; all these things will make a big difference to everyone," she concluded.



Ms Mullan, Ms Gallagher, Ms Devenny, Ms Browne, LC Poet : Eilean NíChuilleanain, Ms Gillespie and Ms Meehan

# “A New Home for Learning”

By Carra Crumlish and Naoise Davenport

Continued from page 18

We contested six All-Irelands and won one; this was a huge achievement for everyone in the school community, especially the coaches and players,” Mr Doogan recalled. Of course, some memories stick out for different reasons. On one occasion in particular, a dangerous flood would leave its mark on the school grounds.

“I have a few memories, but one that stands out is when the Gideons came with the Bibles and the night after, there was flooding at the gate. It was like an avalanche. We had to dig the mud away, and the small waterfall you see now at the entrance is made from that. On a happier note, Mr Doogan continued to recite some of his fondest memories and feelings about the school.

“Our school is great to work in. The quality of behaviour is highly superior, and the students' respect is very strong. Personally, I think that teaching is the best job in the world, as I love to work with teenagers. Their energy gives you energy. It is the greatest pleasure. The way we deal with special needs students is my greatest and proudest achievement for our school.

“I am thrilled about the news of our new school building. This is a milestone that marks a significant step forward in providing students with a state-of-the-art learning environment. With modern facilities, expanded classrooms, and enhanced resources, the new building reflects the school’s commitment to fostering academic excellence and supporting the personal growth of every student. I look forward to the positive impact this development will have on the school community,” he concluded.

As we step into this incredible new chapter with our beautiful school building, everyone in Merville Community College is filled with gratitude and excitement. We extend our deepest thanks to everyone who made this dream a reality: the planners, builders, school leaders, and our supportive community. Because of your hard work and dedication, we now have a place where students can learn, explore, and thrive for years to come.

Thank you for helping us to build not just a school, but a true home for learning.



“Today is a monumental day in our school history”

- Ms M Mulhall

This is a magnificent day in the history of MCC. 25 years in the waiting for this day (nearly a ¼ of a century). As one of seven still here from day one (myself, Ms Rita O'Brien, Ms Joanne Devenney, Ms Anne Browne, Ms Niamh Hegarty, Ms Breda McGroarty, and Ms Diane McLaughlin), I felt I wanted to speak today to recognise the significance of our journey.

It was Cecelia Keaveny who came up with the idea to advocate for a secondary school in East Inishowen, an idea that was very much needed and wanted. Michael Martin, the now Taoiseach, rubber-stamped Merville CC on his last day of office as Minister of Education in January 2000—26 years to the date.

In 2001, Mr Anthony Doogan was appointed Principal and drove the project on with huge enthusiasm and energy, setting up many new systems of teaching and learning where so many students flourished. He oversaw the delivery of the upper building in 2005 and continued to campaign hard for the completion of the project. It proved a huge slog—so many empty promises year on year. Eamon Ryan secured the site we now stand on today, which also proved a huge fight. However, we now finally have a building to match the magnificent site the school sits.

We set up a Staff Action Group led by many staff, but also many staff who have since left, like Barry Molloy. We canvassed for an upgrade of our lower building knowing the wait for this building was further delayed. We met Joe McHugh in hotels, we protested with Charlie McConalogue at local meetings, we met Norma Foley in Letterkenny, and had many, many meetings with Donegal ETB to voice our need for proper school facilities.

Nine Ministers of Education have passed through the Dáil, and finally, we can stand here today with a building fit for purpose.

But today is not just about us here present, it's about all our past students, all our past staff, and all our past parents. It's about older brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, neighbours, mummies and daddies (who went here as students), staff who went here as students (Ms Cavanagh, Ms Mullan, Ms McGuinness, Ms Cregan), and grannies who once taught here (Agnes K would love a wee mention). To all these people who continued to stand by the school and support it, and continue to send their children here, we say a massive thank you.



The MCC Originals

## Mr Mc Cabe’s Reflection

This is a day of great joy and celebration as we open the doors of this new, state-of-the-art school (the most up-to-date secondary school in the country). It is a day filled with excitement and pride, but it is also a day that calls us to pause, to reflect, and to truly appreciate what stands before us. Here in Ireland, we are blessed with the freedom to learn safely. Each morning, students can walk through school gates without fear, carrying books instead of burdens. Yet, across the world, millions of children do not share this reality. Many wake each day without the certainty of education.

Many are denied the chance to learn because of poverty or conflict; over 100 million children cannot attend school today across the world because of war or poverty. Others are unable to read or write, not because they lack ability, but because opportunity was never given to them; over 3.3 million children are in forced labour as we stand here today.

In the past five years, 1,715 children have been kidnapped in Nigeria simply because they wanted to attend school. Approximately 2.2 million adolescent girls have been banned from attending school beyond the sixth grade in Afghanistan. So if you can read, then you are more fortunate than 3 billion people who can't.

When you take a drink from any of the water supplies here, you will be refreshed, whereas 1 in 4 children in our world will be made ill from the water they have to drink. Food will be readily available to all of us twice a day in our school, yet 11 people every minute across the world die from hunger.

When we think about all this, the privilege of this school becomes deeply real. This building is more than modern classrooms and advanced technology — it is a place of safety, hope, and possibility. It stands as a promise to every student who enters its doors that they are valued, supported, and believed in. It is a space where dreams can begin, where voices can be heard, and where futures can be shaped.

Because we have been given so much, we are asked to respond with gratitude. Appreciation is shown not only in words but in actions — in how we treat one another, in how we care for this school, and in how we commit ourselves to learning. Education is a powerful gift, and how we use it matters. It has the power to lift lives, to break cycles of hardship, and to create understanding in a world that often feels divided.

As we open this school today, may we do so with thankful hearts, with awareness of those who long for the opportunities we have, and with the determination to never take this place for granted. May this school be a light — a place where kindness is practised, potential is nurtured, where people are prepared not just for exams but for life, and young people are empowered to make a difference in the world.

In the words of Malala Yousafzai: "One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world."



Ms S McCarron, Ms H Gallagher and Ms A Ruddy

Looking out at our surroundings and from the windows here I can clearly see the Bayfield, Merville Celtic, Glencrow Hall, St. Pius Chapel, and further afield we have Merville GAA, Greencastle Community Centre, and The Fishery College, along with all our local businesses and retailers that have greatly supported us through extracurricular activities and work experiences. We hope that in time we can repay our services as we stand as a state-of-the-art facility in our community.

This is the first time the Department has delivered a turnkey building to us. I would like to acknowledge the work of our Principal, Ms Caroline Doherty, and our deputies, Mr Christopher Hegarty and Ms Sue Donaghy, for seeing this project through to completion. They have ensured no stone was left unturned, and that is why the specification and finish on the building are the best in the country. It is now up to us to look after and care for it so that your children and grandchildren can avail themselves of the facilities that you now have on your doorstep. Today is a monumental day in our history.

A quote from a Seamus Heaney poem called Scaffolding is very fitting, as now finally, after 25 years, we can take down the scaffolding and feel totally safe, secure, warm, and happy in our new school: "Never fear, we may let the scaffolds fall, confident that we have built our wall."

# Our Summer in Uganda

Two teachers from Merville Community College spent their summer a little differently in 2025. Ms Geraldine Cavanagh and Ms Aimee McDermott took a trip to Uganda during the summer holidays. It was here that they worked for a UK-based charity called Play Action International, where they helped out with the development of a playground at Namagabi UMEA Primary School, located in the Kayunga District of Uganda.

This is what Ms McDermott had to say about their trip: “In the mornings and afternoons we worked to prepare the site that eventually became the playground we built. This involved a lot of digging holes, mixing cement, sanding and painting the structure. It was amazing how creative our project manager Sadie was, creating safari-inspired climbing frames out of old tyres and musical instruments and pretend cars of oil barrels. Later each day we would arrange creative play sessions with the children led by Ugandan volunteer Hazel. On these days we would create art and play games with the children. This was a great opportunity for us to learn games, songs, dances, and even a little of the local language from the children. I really enjoyed it because it opened my eyes to the challenges different communities face, and I got to learn about different cultures,” she added. “It was great that we got to give back to the community as they needed so much more than we did.”

During Ms McDermott’s time in Uganda, she noticed how generous and resilient the people are. Ms McDermott told us: “Despite their lack of resources, the children brought us fruit and vegetables as a way of saying thank you before we left. I’ve learned so much about resilience and generosity from both the children and adults in this district, making it very difficult to say goodbye.” When asked if she would recommend going to Africa, this is what Ms McDermott had to say: “Yes, I feel very grateful to have spent a couple of weeks with some incredible people and an amazing charity. We loved our time in Uganda. The culture is so rich and the people are very interesting and caring. Exposing yourself to different cultures teaches you so much about the world and our own society.”

Ms Geraldine Cavanagh, a music and religion teacher at Merville Community College, also took part in this life-changing trip to Uganda over the summer. She spoke of her passion and interest in making a difference whenever she can. “I wanted to do something different this year and I met a girl who recommended going on this trip to Uganda,” she said. With Uganda being a developing nation, Ms Cavanagh spoke of how they always make the best of what they have. “I learned that they are very resourceful and they make things out of anything such as footballs and skipping ropes out of dried banana leaves. Overall, they are happy even though they don’t have very much,” she said. “I would love to go again and be able to go back and see what that place has become with the money that was raised,” she added.

Ms McDermott and Ms Cavanagh would like to thank you so much to everyone who supported their fundraising and wished them well on their trip to Uganda: “It’s hard to fully express the impact all of your help has had, and will continue to have, on the children that will benefit from this playground and the creative play training their teachers received to help them learn, play, and have a childhood for as long as possible.

Perhaps the resourcefulness and happiness of these Ugandan children, and the terrific work by two of our teachers here at MCC, can be a great example for us all to follow. “I would recommend everyone to go at least once in their life and think it would be a great experience for anyone who did it,” Ms Cavanagh concluded. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms McDermott and Ms Cavanagh on their great work in Uganda, and we thank them both for taking the time out of their busy day to tell us about it.

By Lewis, Andrew, Oisin and Jay TYC

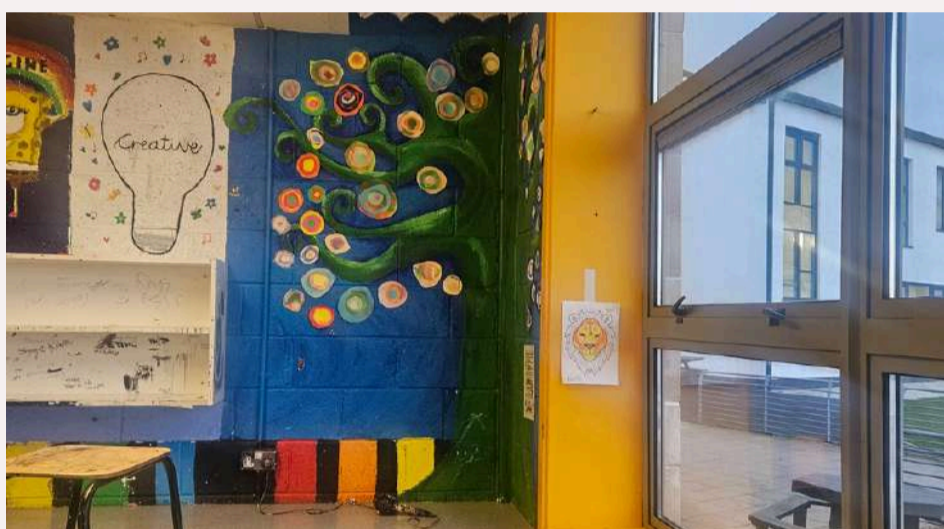


*Ms McDermott, Ms Cavanagh and the Play Action International team of volunteers and local workers.*



# The Art Room Safe Space

The Art Room Safe Space was created by Ms H Gallagher because she noticed that whenever her class ended and it was break time, some students didn't want to leave the room. Hence, the decision was made to keep it open at lunchtime for students to chill in. It has now been a safe space for any and all students in Merville Community College for 15 years, and teachers plan to keep it that way for a lot longer. Teachers volunteer to supervise the room at all times, even at lunch and break times.



**A place of colour and positivity**

One such teacher who supervises the room said that she would recommend the art room “for all students, from first year to sixth year,” as it is a place where students can find their group of people; no one in the art room is left out or discriminated against. We recently spoke to some of the students who regularly attend the art room during lunchtimes and asked for their thoughts and views of the room in general and its sense of inclusivity. Their thoughts reflect the nature of this shared space and truly open our eyes to the importance of places like this. A welcoming school environment can be a major confidence boost for students, especially if they are experiencing personal or domestic issues.



**The Tree of Life**



**Positive vibes**

One of our interviewees is a newer student who frequents the art room at lunch times, and here is what they had to say about it: “The Art room is the main reason for the increase in my levels of self-confidence, and it has also greatly increased my feelings of comfort and safety. I have many amazing memories of the art room despite my relatively short time here.”

The art room is also "as diverse as you can get." This speaks volumes about how welcoming this safe space actually is and how creative and like-minded the individuals who spend their time there really are. It is truly amazing to hear this, as it clearly demonstrates that while many may dread school for whatever reason, whether that is because of all the work or because they may just dislike a certain class, they can still find a safe space where they can be themselves, and this can help them enjoy school to its fullest. It is a source of great pride, that some people who may feel like they don't really belong anywhere have a space where they do belong, and no matter what struggles anyone goes through, they are always welcome in the art room, where new friends are made and genuine friendships flourish.

**By Stephen Moran and Peter Clerkin**

## Bí Cineálta

Stand Up Week took place the week of the 3rd of November. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the challenges LGBTQ+ students face so that their school experience can be more positive. The theme this year is 'Bí Cineálta', which means 'Be Kind'—students learned the importance of this during SPHE class. The StandUp Committee distributed rainbow wristbands, ran a pop-up café, and joined students from Coláiste Eoghain and Crana College at Buncrana Cinema to mark the week. We would like to thank Ms Cooney and Ms Hegarty from the Home Economics Department for providing the delicious delights for the café and Ms Hegarty from the Art Department for the beautiful Cinealtás Canvas, pictured to the right.



# Does Donegal have it all?



**Glenveagh Castle**

I am going to share why Donegal is already a fantastic place to visit and also outline my vision for how we can make it even better and more successful as a leading destination for tourism. Donegal is brimming with potential, and here's why. Donegal is my home; it is my place of birth. I belong to it, essentially. But to me, it's more than a place that I just inhabit. It's a lifestyle and a privilege. Often referred to as the forgotten county, Donegal is a wild corner of the earth, best known for its windswept beaches, rugged landscape and idyllic views, as well as producing much-loved football-inspired soft drinks, luxurious handcrafted wool, and soft-spoken country singers who go by the name of Daniel. There is just something in the soil.

In 2016, National Geographic released an article on the top 17 places to visit in the world, and Donegal topped the list. Once again in 2023, Lonely Planet pronounced Donegal as being THE best place in the world to visit. The statement from National Geographic went viral, with many locals delighted to get global recognition for the wonderful place that they live in. It stated, 'With a weather-nibbled coast spotted with sea stacks, Blue Flag beaches and offshore islands, Donegal is a land that feels undiscovered.'

'Undiscovered' is a perfect way to describe Donegal. This phrase resonates both physically and naturally. Think of the untouched, raw, and magical places like Malin Head and Kinnagoe Beach. These places are ones that hold a place in my heart and provoke a feeling of serenity and loneliness that go in harmony with one another. It's a tranquillity found in the solitude of being alone, just yourself, the waves, and the wind. These locations are unbelievably scenic and geographically immense, untouched by humankind, yet shaped and battered by the elements, offering a feeling that few places can provide.

But maybe these places wouldn't be quite as undiscovered if much-needed resources were provided to give local people the opportunity to discover and share these places and all that accompanies them; this would give our economy a very welcome boost. Malin Head is the most northerly point on the island of Ireland. However, it does not have any form of a tourist/visitor centre to promote its beauty, nor does it have a proper car park to cater for the visitors that do come. Four hundred and eighty kilometres from Malin Head is Mizen Head, the most southerly point in Ireland, which benefits from both an information centre and a proper car park. Another huge infrastructural project that needs to be undertaken is the return of the train line. The restoration of a train line would have a huge impact. Sometimes it feels as though we are cut off and deprived of the opportunities we deserve.



**Malin Head**



**Wild Ireland**

Donegal also offers a wealth of recreational activities and facilities to enhance a visitor's experience. Glenveagh National Park is a standout, boasting paths for cyclists and walkers. From the park entrance, you can take a shuttle bus to the breathtaking Glenveagh Castle, where you can enjoy tours, explore its stunning gardens, and savour a meal at its restaurant. Other fantastic places, such as Donegal Town, have buses coming from all over the country where people enjoy a cultural day wandering around the town, popping into the Abbey Hotel for a meal or into McCafferty's bar for some live music or to enjoy a luxurious experience learning about and browsing in Magee's tweed store.

More bucket list places that also deserve honourable mentions are Gaoth Dobhair in its entirety; it's such a spot. It's Irish-speaking, has a wild feel, and the things to do show visitors what the county and indeed the country are all about. And of course, Malin Head, where you can walk in the company of docile and adorable alpacas, casually overlooking some of the most scenic and captivating views in the country. Sure, why not! How about stepping back thousands of years into Wild Ireland in Burnfoot and visiting the wolves, bears, and otters that ran, roamed, and paddled in the Hills of Donegal? Perhaps sightseeing the Sliabh League cliffs on a boat interests you? Or have a game of golf at the world-renowned Ballyliffin Golf Course? So very many adventures await you. You'll find that the people are welcoming, passionate, and resilient.

Tír Conaill men and women are shaped by tradition, interests, and culture, such as Gaelic football, fishing, crafting, and playing traditional music, and it makes up a big part of our lives. What's not to love when there is this much deeply rooted culture embedded in the county? I am very proud of my home. I hope that you will share this passion for it, and I invite all readers and indeed locals to get out there and explore these treasures and discover how gifted we are to call such a place our own!

“Níl aon áit cosúil leis an mbaile”

**By Muireann Doyle TYA**



**Ballyliffin Golf Course**

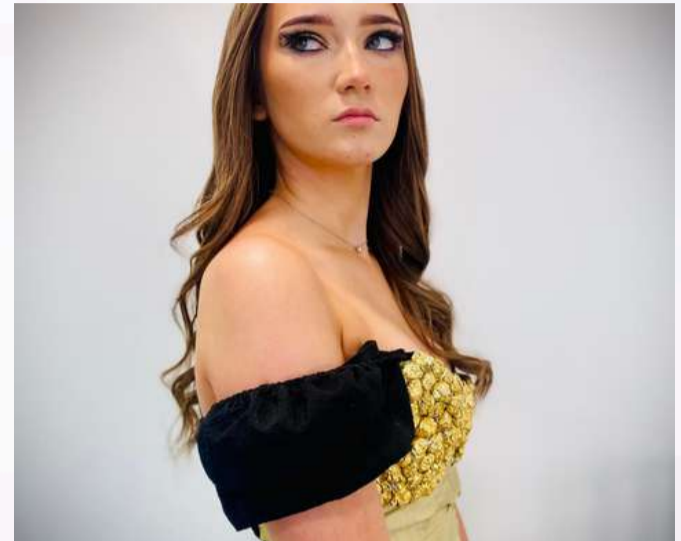
# Junk Routure 2026



Maia McDermott



Mollie McDermott



Daisy McSkeane



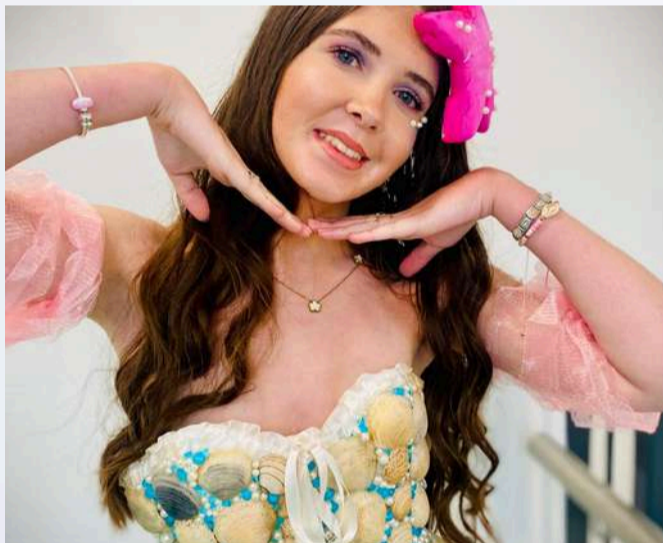
Rosie McLaughlin



Emily Smith



Tara McCormick



Naoise Crumlish



Kelly Lake



Rebecca Bourke



Nicole Ryan



Anna Tweedie

# Junk Kouture 2026

By Ellie McDaid and Daisy McSkeane

## The Stories behind the Style

I chose this design for my dress because I wanted to create a memorial piece in honour of my granny. I thought of this design because I was always very close to my granny, and every time we went to visit her, we would play card games for hours. We always had great laughs, and playing cards with her is one of my favourite memories.

The design was mostly made up of playing cards along with other materials such as red and white roses, net, wire, pearls, and butterflies. The whole body of the dress was made of cards, and at the bottom of the dress, there was a black netted ruffle attached, along with white and red roses. I chose to use these roses as they were my granny's favourite flowers. At the back of the dress, I used the netted ruffle again with roses attached to it as it flows down along the back of the dress. On both sides of the netted ruffle, more cards were attached to hold everything in place. For the umbrella, I sewed roses on the top and dangled pearls from them, which had cards on the ends.

The biggest challenge that I faced when making this piece was layering the cards using hot glue. It was so difficult as the cards kept moving. If they weren't placed correctly, the lines of the cards would be wonky, which would lead to the bottom of the dress being uneven. To prevent this from happening, I sewed the cards at the top and the bottom so they could hold the rest of the cards in place.



Emily Smith

Another challenge that I faced was the netted ruffle, as it was quite a thin material. I had to sew the roses into the material, but since the material was so thin, it kept ripping. I overcame this by trying different strategies and not giving up. My design changed from my original thought, which was completely different. At the beginning, I was in a group of three, which unfortunately didn't work out, and I was left on my own. So I decided to change the piece and do something meaningful for myself.

The dress took me just over a month. I worked on it for hours each day and put in a lot of effort. A lot of my time was wasted because the first idea didn't work out. If I were to improve something while doing this project, I would have designed the dress to be longer. The dress was just below knee length, but I would have preferred it to be longer and fall just above the ankle. Now that I'm finished, I am filled with relief. I am very happy with the final product as it turned out exactly how I wanted it to. I'm so glad that it went as well as it did, as it was something my granny loved and I wanted to represent her as best as I could. I'm happy that I chose this design, but most importantly, I'm proud that I didn't give up even when it was very difficult having to do it by myself. I would definitely recommend Junk Kouture to people who are creative and artistic. You have to be hardworking and fully dedicated as it does become very stressful towards the end.

Emily Smith

I chose this design because I wanted to make a piece that emphasises how much people loved Daniel Doherty's bakery. Daniel Doherty's bread has sentimental value to the town of Merville and elsewhere, and the decision for it to shut down after 145 years of being in business was a huge shock to everyone. This dress represents putting a beginning to an ending and the emotion in the community after the announcement of its closing down.

I used Daniel Doherty's bread wrappers for my dress and lollipop sticks for the accessory. The main technique I used was ironing. I did this because it was the most efficient, and it worked best for the type of material the bread wrappers were made from. I also incorporated some sewing into my dress through the small details that were hard to do.

The biggest challenge was definitely the areas that I had to sew. When I was sewing, the wrappers kept ripping as they weren't made from strong enough material. At the beginning, I also found the ironing process a bit difficult as I wasn't used to it and I didn't know how long to keep the heat on it before it would burn, so I had to guess at the start. However, when I found out the right time, it was a lot easier; it just took some getting used to at the start.

The whole design took a total of two days. I didn't plan for this to happen. Originally, I was in a group of three, but things didn't work out, and I was left without a dress with two days left. I knew that I had to enter something, so I decided quickly on my idea, and I had to use all the spare time I had to complete this design.



Bella Lynch

My idea of Daniel Doherty's wrapper dress didn't change at all, as I knew I could not afford any changes to the idea because I only had two days to complete it. If I were to improve on something while doing this project, I would definitely improve my time management so I could make my design more detailed.

Now that the dress is complete and handed in, I am filled with relief and peace. I was extremely stressed as I only had two days to make a whole dress and accessories, and I thought I wouldn't get it done. I am very pleased with myself that I actually completed it before the deadline. I am also quite pleased with the final product. I think it turned out quite well. It really emphasises the story I wanted it to, and I am glad that nothing went wrong while I was making the dress.

I would fully recommend Junk Kouture. I have wanted to do Junk Kouture since fourth class in primary school, and I believe that it is the best thing to do in Transition Year. If you decide to do Junk Kouture, you have to be prepared to put in a lot of work and effort and be under a lot of stress at times.

Bella Lynch

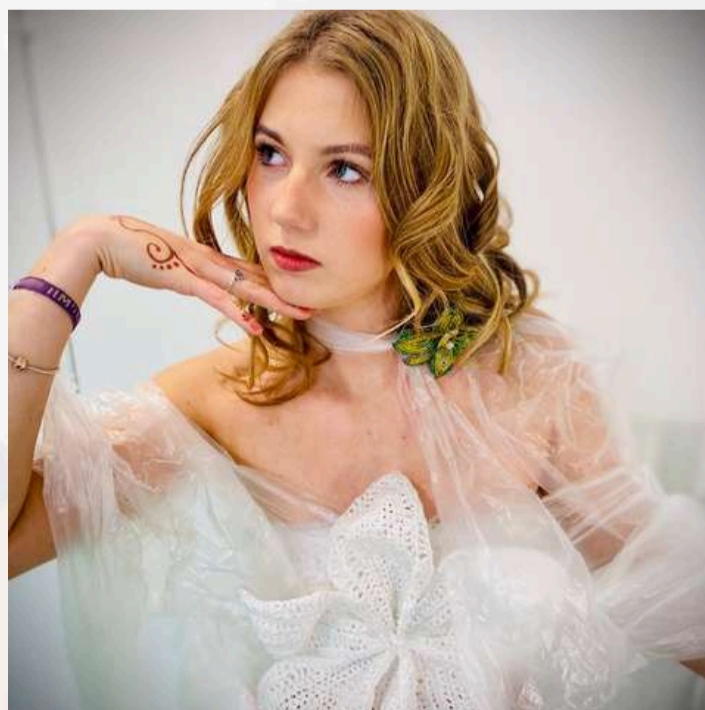
We chose this specific design because we wanted to raise awareness about the careless use of plastic bags. We are all very interested in the topic of climate change. As the younger generation, we know we have to be the ones to stand up and make the change. This dress represents one of the biggest causes of climate change today. We wanted to make a lasting piece that highlights how plastic bags don't decompose.

The materials we used for our dress were recycled plastic bags, beads, and wire that were leftover from a previous Junior Cert project. All the materials used were recycled materials or leftover items.

The main technique used was crocheting, which was used to make the skirt, the top, and a flower on the front of the top. We also incorporated sewing into our piece by draping the plastic bags from the shoulders and from the bottom of the skirt. We also used a French beading technique for the flower accessory, which was attached to the plastic on the neck.

The biggest challenge we faced was definitely crocheting the plastic bags through the top and skirt, as it kept ripping when we did so. This also happened during the sewing process due to the material being so thin. We overcame this by taking different approaches and not giving up.

It took us the whole amount of time that was assigned for us to complete this project. Our ideas kept changing, which reduced our time. The original idea we had didn't work out, which led us to waste a lot of time on something that failed, so we had to come up with a new idea quickly.



Nicole Ryan

Our idea changed a few times during this process due to certain things not working. Our original idea of using a tube top didn't go well, so we switched to a normal T-shirt because we thought it would work better, but it didn't work at all, so we had to resort to our first idea of the tube top. We also wanted to crochet an ankle-length skirt, but due to the deadline, we knew we wouldn't have enough time, so we had to adjust and make the skirt knee-length and sew the plastic bags to drape onto the bottom to make it longer.

If we were to improve something while doing this project, it would definitely be to manage our time better. We wouldn't spend as much time on something small instead of focusing on the task that was more important.

Now that we are done and the outfit has been handed in, I feel at peace; I am able to breathe, and I am quite relieved that we got it finished in time for the deadline. I am pleased with the final product. I think it turned out very well, and it portrays the story exactly how I wanted it to. I'm glad that I didn't give up even when things kept going wrong.

I would definitely recommend Junk Kouture, but only if you are going to be fully dedicated and willing. It is quite stressful at times, but it's very rewarding in the end when you've finished the piece.

Nadia Duliba

# “Superfly TikTok Sensation”

Amanda Riley, Merville's newest Superfly TikTok sensation with over one hundred thousand followers on TikTok, has entered our little town with a bang. For those of you who don't know the “Superfly Lunchlady,” she is a middle-aged woman who broke the internet with her caring manner, unlevelled generosity, and general positivity back at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. Amanda was working as the manager of a Connecticut school district of ten, when the lockdown hit; this was when she and her wonderful team of lunch ladies set up an incredible initiative where they provided all people, rich or poor, with the opportunity to get free meals. This was pivotal in a lot of families' well-being, as many people found themselves out of work for the first time ever. This was also when Amanda's daughter inspired her to set up a TikTok page so she could share the menu for the day. Amanda always paired the menu with a positive quote of the day to maintain high spirits in the community.

Amanda's natural charm, fun clothes, and funky glasses quickly won over the love of not just her community but also a more international fanbase.

Amanda's TikTok has since evolved as she retired in 2024 and made the bold decision to begin a brand-new chapter of her life, one that would take her thousands of miles from the school kitchens that made her famous to the quiet coastal beauty of Merville.

Many of her followers were surprised by her decision to start over in Merville, where she now lives a quieter life.



When people found out that a woman with over 100,000 followers was moving to our small town, they were curious. Many thought that social media fame came with glamour and excitement. Amanda arrived in Merville with a bang, just like she did with her online followers years ago, with kindness and a spark that made her go viral.

What's noticeable about Amanda now is how happy she seems. For years, she was in charge of a district in Connecticut with ten schools and she helped coordinate meal initiatives during a tough time. But Merville is different. It's peaceful.

In Merville, Amanda seems to have found a kind of peace she didn't know was possible. Her recent TikTok videos show walks by the sea, sunsets, and quiet moments. There's a calmness in her voice that speaks volumes. It's the sound of someone who no longer has to hold everything.

When asked what something she could not live without, Amanda said, “Moving to the other side of the world, I was forced to leave behind material things I was sure I could never live without, but this was really a blessing in disguise because as long as I have love and my health, that is all anyone really needs.”

Amanda often talks about being grateful and slowing down. The quiet life in Merville suits her. She enjoys her morning coffee by the sea, chatting with neighbours and seeing faces in local shops. There's something about Merville that grounds her. She's fully embraced it. She feels a sense of solidarity with the community and with herself. After years of rushing, she's found steadiness.

What's great about this chapter is that it doesn't feel like an ending. It feels like growth. Her TikTok has changed from updates to thoughtful reflections and appreciation for simple moments. The positivity is still there. It's softer now and more personal. She's not pretending to be happy or anyone she isn't; she's just living her life as her own authentic self.

Locals who've met Amanda say she's the person her followers love online. She still wears glasses and colourful outfits, but there's an added ease about her. She's not just defined by her role or online following; she's just Amanda enjoying her home and the people around her.



Merville has gained more than a TikTok personality. It's gained someone who understands the value of community, kindness and simple moments. In return, Amanda has gained peace, belonging and quiet happiness that grows each day.

Her journey reminds us that it's never too late to change direction. From managing school kitchens during a crisis to standing by the shores of Lough Foyle, Amanda Riley inspires us. She doesn't seek attention; she just lives authentically.

She once helped a community with food and uplifting words. Now in Merville, she helps build it up, by just being part of it.

**By Cara Harkin**





# Marty Supreme

## Review

By Eve Cavanagh

Marty Supreme, directed by John Safdie, is an intense, action-packed film about the protagonist Marty Mauser excelling in ping pong. This movie is completely atypical of a sports movie; it doesn't contain any training montages or monologues about technique, the sport is almost secondary to the film, which is really centred around Marty's narcissistic ambition and need for success.

The film is set in New York, post WWII and is brought to life by the ingenious casting. Timothee Chalamet plays the protagonist and perfectly embodies the character's dedication and impulsivity. Gwyneth Paltrow plays Kay Stone, and as her character came out of a 7-year acting hiatus for her role.

It's clear from the beginning that Marty will stop at nothing to succeed. The film captures the audience's attention when Marty holds his colleague at gunpoint for the money for his travel fare to London to compete in the championships.

Arriving in London and unhappy with his standard of accommodation, he gets himself a free room at the Ritz Hotel. Proving that Marty can be very cunning and persuasive. This is where he becomes infatuated with former actress Kay Stone. His desire encourages him to live lavishly and beyond his means in an effort to be noticed by her. Which surprisingly proves successful. She is, from then on, one of the many people Marty uses for his own gain.

The camerawork in the scenes where Marty competes is very intentional. The shots favour intimate close-ups using long lenses to encapsulate the intensity of the matches. It gives us a sense of Marty's focus and isolates him from the surrounding chaos.

After great success, Marty is against a deaf Japanese superstar, Koto Endo, in the final. When beaten by the Japanese player, he bursts into rage. So used to being the best, he doesn't take the loss well and demands a rematch. His demands prove unfruitful when met with Endo's calm relief. This scene shows us the contrast between their personalities. Endo, free from any external noise, listens to the rhythm of the game itself rather than the fans. Allowing him to reach a flow state. His success is derived not from ego but from respect for his craft. Marty is the opposite. He is overconfident and desperate for recognition. He wants validation from his passion. He plays by force, not the flow of the game.

Back home, the film follows Marty as he scrambles for enough money to compete again. We follow him through all sorts of trouble. The film's breakneck chaos mirrors the back-and-forth motion of a ping-pong match. The protagonist's ambition constantly pushes him to do the next thing, no matter how crazy it is.

When Marty finally rematches Endo in Japan, at first it was supposed to be an exhibition match. Realising he had nothing to lose as he was already disqualified from the tournament, he exposed the rig and demanded a rematch; this time, his demands were answered. After a painfully tense game, Marty proved himself as champion.

Although his inner truth would not be honoured by outer rewards, and he would return home empty-handed, this time he was returning home to new beginnings. In the climax of the film, Marty, who had been denying his responsibilities for the past month, embraces fatherhood in a vulnerable moment. This ending works because it shows Marty's character development. Seeing his newborn child humbles him and gives him a true purpose.

I found the original film score incredible, and it truly complimented the movie beautifully. With many 80s songs also featured despite being set in the 50s, it suggests that this film was Marty looking back on this period of his life thirty years later. The warm colour palette added to this nostalgic atmosphere, making it feel very reminiscent.

The pacing is one of the film's greatest strengths. Scenes rarely overstay their welcome, again maintaining the to-and-fro momentum.

Marty Supreme is unlike any modern sports movie. It challenges the viewer to navigate Marty's narcissistic, selfish ego, but ultimately compelling character. It convinces us to root for Marty despite his flaws. This film is a testament to the cost of ambition and the heartache of inevitable sacrifices for your dreams. Marty Supreme is two hours and thirty minutes long, and not one second was wasted.



# MCC'S Roman Holiday

## Trip to Rome 2025

Midnight, October 21st.

The bus rolled sleepily into the lower car park and collected its cargo:

36 students, five staff, 64 items of luggage, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Two roll calls later, and four hours after that, the plane swallowed us whole. We watched Ireland rush away beneath the orange cracks of a bleary sunrise as MCC students settled into various stages of sleep, reading or resting quietly until Italy finally presented itself for landing.

We disembarked. We fumbled luggage from a trundling carousel. We made our way towards the coach that would introduce us to the delights of Rome, though not before Ms Ward and Ms Guy engaged in what could only be described as hostage negotiations with some extremely committed Italian airport security, who appeared to require a blood sample and a DNA test before allowing us and three remaining students to leave the airport.

Eventually, Mr Curran arrived like an apparition, brandishing passports and setting us free. We found the bus and headed directly for the city.

Pine trees lined the route and then, suddenly and unmistakably, the imposing remains of the Colosseum loomed into view. With the weather leaning more Rashenny than Riviera, our first interaction with Rome came courtesy of a pavement entrepreneur selling ponchos. Deal of the week: MCC special. Two for a fiver.

By then our stomachs were rumbling to rival Mount Vesuvius, so with time pressing we found the nearest pizzeria and ate al fresco under the gaze of the Forum ruins. Pizza had never tasted more victorious. Students, despite the long night of travel, remained upbeat, patient, and good-humoured, setting the tone for the days ahead.

A hop, a skip, and an hour-long queue later, our guide began wowing us with the world of the ancient Romans. We learned about events that once took place in the Colosseum, the true nature of gladiators (more Rab C. Nesbitt than Russell Crowe), the shared toilets, and the astonishing engineering that allowed mock sea battles, all in exchange for the plebeian vote.

Rome that day carried us through time with its buildings, cobbled streets, architecture, and its frankly Adonis-like population. We soaked it all in, mostly through our feet. Rome, it turned out, was all about the walking. By the end of day one, new personal records for steps had been set. We arrived at the hotel that night and drifted into the softly lit foyer after dinner, dreaming only of foot rubs and horizontal living.

Day two saw us up early and on the road to Pompeii. The town proved charming, full of local food options and unique gift shops. Students engaged enthusiastically, and very respectfully, in souvenir haggling before enjoying a relaxed lunch. Their curiosity, good manners, and willingness to listen made the visit all the more rewarding.

That afternoon, we tackled Mount Vesuvius. The shuttle bus ride to the climbing point was unforgettable. Drivers on this route, trained in piloting 52-seater buses at extreme altitudes, appeared entirely immune to fear. Despite thick mist, hairpin turns, speeding oncoming traffic, and pedestrians seemingly auditioning for Viking funerals, they laughed off the nervous gasps and white-knuckled silence from Irish students and staff alike.

After that, climbing the mist-covered slopes of Vesuvius felt almost serene. The views, the shared experience, and the sense of achievement made the effort more than worthwhile.

On the way back, we stopped at the outlet stores for coffee and retail therapy. Spirits were high, conversations animated, and there was a shared sense of appreciation for the day's adventures. Purchases were made, budgets ignored, and gratitude quietly noted.

Day three returned us to Rome and Vatican City. Plans to see Pope Leo were adjusted when word on the rue suggested he had entertained a man called Charles the day before and might have needed a little recovery time. We respectfully left him to it and turned our attention to the Vatican itself.

Even the exterior felt cinematic, like stepping onto a Baz Luhrmann set. Inside, it was dripping with gold, awash with riches, and heavy with centuries of borrowed art and wealth. Students moved through the spaces with genuine interest and maturity, taking in the scale and significance of what they were seeing.

We passed through the Raphael Rooms, including The School of Athens, a gathering of the greatest minds of classical philosophy. Almost like lunchtime in the MCC staffroom.

For cartography enthusiasts, the Gallery of Maps stretched for 120 metres, lined with 16th-century frescoes showing Italy as it was understood over 400 years ago. We encountered Laocoön and His Sons, frozen in divine punishment, and the Belvedere Torso, so admired that Michelangelo refused to restore it, choosing instead to learn from its form.

We finished at the Sistine Chapel.

Necks strained. Minds full. Silence attempted.

Blinking back into the sunshine, slightly overwhelmed, we boarded the bus and made one final return to the shops, gathering gifts for home.

Our last burst of freedom took us to Magicland theme park, fully possessed by Halloween. Rollercoasters, ghost trains, chainsaw-wielding actors, upside-down mayhem, and a full musical number involving witches and the park mascot ensured we ended the trip at maximum volume. Students embraced every moment with infectious energy and impeccable behaviour.

From there, we gathered at the outlets for one last wander through the aisles, before hauling ourselves back to the bus laden with bags, memories, and a very gentle exhaustion. One airport ride later, a very long connecting gate (which honestly felt like Rome all over again), and a three-hour flight, Adam escorted us from Dublin to Moville in a haze of chat, mid-term plans, and an overwhelming desire for sleep.

We arrived home early on Sunday morning, quieter, slower, but still trailing a little bit of Roma in our midst: dust on our shoes, stories in our pockets, and a shared sense that we had been part of something rare, ridiculous, and genuinely special.

Rome delivered.

Many thanks to Mr Curran and Ms Maguire for all the organisation and to Ms McLaughlin, Ms Guy, and the entire staff team for the care, and supervision throughout the trip, and sincere thanks to our outstanding MCC students, whose behaviour, curiosity, and good humour represented the school brilliantly from start to finish.



Aran Lafferty

By K. Ward

# MCC SKI TRIP 2026



## “Memories that will last forever”

Our skiing excitement began long before we reached the slopes. Travelling to Italy was a huge part of our experience, starting with an early morning meeting in Derry airport at 6.15 am with heavy suitcases and a thrilling buzz among the group.

For most of us students, it was our first time travelling without our parents. Being responsible for our own suitcases, boarding passes, and belongings in the airport was intimidating at first, but it now seems insignificant after the amazing week we had.

We were exhausted when we arrived in Polsa after a two-and-a-half-hour flight followed by another hour and a half on a bus journey through the Italian Alps, but our spirits were high. We gathered in the hotel reception to get our room allocations before venturing off to explore Hotel Bellavista. I couldn't believe the views we had from our room balconies—staying right on the slopes was an unreal experience.

The snow fun began within two hours of us arriving, with a pre-dinner snowball fight that saw us throwing ourselves down slopes and completely forgetting about how tired we were. Then came our delicious dinner in the restaurant, where we were well looked after by Bruno and Claudia.

After dinner, Ms Cavanagh's ski group made our way to the bar/pizzeria next door to our hotel, where we delivered a fantastic karaoke performance of 'Pink Pony Club' accompanied by a very enthusiastic dance routine. Our performance kept the locals entertained and helped start the bar staff-MCC friendship off on a good note. We then trekked down the slopes to get our boots and helmets fitted, marking the beginning of the skiing experience.

The next morning was another early start, with a 7 am wake-up call, and we were on the slopes by 9 am. However, this time, no one seemed to care as we were overcome with a mixture of nervousness and excitement for our first day of skiing. None of us knew what to expect, and we struggled desperately on the baby slopes, with more than a few falls and some students deciding to use their teachers, classmates, and some unfortunate Italian children as crash barriers.

The conditions weren't easy, with a snowstorm blowing in mid-week, leaving us to ski with poor visibility and deep snow, but the improvements in our skills were fast and dramatic, all thanks to our amazing instructors who had us attempting the blue slopes by day two. Of course, there were still tumbles and some unfortunate injuries, but we were all extremely proud of ourselves.

While skiing was, of course, the main focus of the trip, the evenings made the experience even more special. After hard days on the slopes, we were lucky enough to return to the hotel and take a trip down to the heated pool and sauna with our friends, with a speaker playing as we compared the progress we had all made that day and let the warm water relax our muscles and soothe the aches all over our bodies.



Other fun evening activities included a dance session in the common room, ranging from the Cha Cha Slide with Mrs Cavanagh to céili dancing with Mrs O'Hare and Mrs McFadden, who eventually got even the boys to join in, much to their own amusement. We also enjoyed a quiz in the restaurant, table tennis in the pizzeria, sledding on the slopes, and countless snowball fights wherever we could find the space, leaving everyone freezing cold but still laughing.

Friday was our final day of skiing, and after a scenic trip down a red slope to San Valentino in the morning, the afternoon was taken up by an intense and competitive race. We took part in a timed 'slalom' run on the baby slope. After the race, there was a prize-giving ceremony for the fastest skiers, where we all received our ski certifications and enjoyed some delicious hot chocolates to warm up. This was followed by a few more runs on the slopes before we begrudgingly returned our skis, boots, helmets and ski passes to the rental area.

We then trudged back up to our hotel, holding back tears at having to say goodbye to everyone. There was a scramble for the showers before we met the teachers in the pizzeria for some pizza before heading back to our rooms to speed-pack everything so we could savour our last evening in Polsa.

It was a long night. The evening was spent in the bar chatting and socialising, sharing all the memories of the trip that somehow already felt nostalgic. Once 10 pm hit, we were all sent to our rooms to do any last-minute packing and cleaning. Most of us didn't sleep, deciding that it would be harder to get up after 3 hours than to just stay awake.

At 3 am, we tiptoed out of the hotel and packed our luggage into the bus Tetris-style. The bus ride to Verona Airport was a quiet one, with most of us finally losing the battle against sleep after being awake for more than 20 hours. Our time in the airport was peaceful, and everything ran smoothly—that was until we were about to board the plane and panic struck when I reached for my phone to let my mum know we were boarding, and it wasn't there.

I went into full freak-out mode, with tears streaming down my face. I had left it in the bathroom on the other side of the airport and had no hope of getting it back... until a security worker answered the calls my friend was sending through and ran through the airport to deliver it just in time. Although at the time it definitely wasn't a funny moment for me, or for the teachers trying to help, I can now look back and laugh, and it really shows how much we all relied on each other throughout the trip.

We arrived back in Ireland exhausted physically and mentally, but with memories that will last forever, stories that we'll tell for years, and a newfound confidence—already planning how soon we can go skiing again.

I would like to say a huge thank you to Ms McDaid for the amazing job she did at organising the trip, as well as to all the other teachers and members of staff who made this trip possible.



By Rhéa McLaughlin

# Is AI a Threat to us all?

*“AI is not a threat, it is a tool”.*

*By Ruairi Lynch*

Lately, much has been written about artificial intelligence, commonly known as AI, and how it may take over the world. I can understand why people feel this way: it's new, powerful, and at times even seems smarter than us. However, I really do not think AI is something we should fear; rather, it is something to work with. If guided in the right direction, it can help us make amazing progress in science, finance, and even in understanding ourselves better.

AI can process information much faster than any human brain. That does not make it smarter, for it simply means that it can handle huge amounts of data without getting tired or distracted. Can you fathom some scientist going over lab results for months? AI does that in minutes. It helps to find the patterns of diseases, discover new materials, and even predict climate changes. Just think of it as a super-fast research partner that never needs to take a break. However, it is still dependent on people in that it needs humans to ask the right questions, give it direction, and decide what the discoveries actually mean.

AI helps people make smarter financial decisions by detecting fraud, reducing risk, and finding market trends that may go unseen to the human eye. It does not do the jobs; it aids people in performing their jobs at an elevated level. Think of it like a navigation system for money: it gives you options and directions, but you still decide where to go. The truth is, AI is not our nemesis. It's a tool, but one reflecting its creators and users. Applied with care, curiosity, and understanding, it lets us solve those problems we have long seen as unsolvable. It can speed up discovery, make businesses fairer and safer, and even give us new ways of understanding the world.

We must learn from it, guide it, and make it work with us rather than being afraid of AI. It is not going to be AI against humans in the future but AI with humans to construct a better world together.



*“AI is a substantial threat to society”.* By

*Muireann Doyle*

I strongly believe AI is a substantial threat to society in this day and age. AI is widely used by all ages globally. Today, over 65% of people use AI regularly. This number has rapidly increased over the past few years due to the launch of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity, which have brought AI directly into people's daily lives. Now, anyone can interact with AI in a natural, conversational way for work, education, or entertainment.

These figures alarm me. I feel AI is being overused and abused by people who are already well-educated, but now they are extinguishing their achievements and education by getting AI to do their work for them. This also applies to those who have just begun their education. As a young person, I think it is necessary that we should be taught and exposed to challenging work to enhance our knowledge, skill set, and develop a work ethic, creativity, and the ability to express an opinion. AI effectively eliminates all of this. It promotes laziness and discourages creativity, as well as, of course, lacking an authentic opinion.

If we are given a speech to write on a certain topic, the prompt will be the same for everyone. If everyone types this prompt into ChatGPT, everyone will end up with the exact same speech. Imagine sitting in a classroom and listening to the same speech 20-30 times, quite a dull image. Whatever happened to personal opinions and the effort to create something original? That is how perspectives and ideologies are broadened and informed.

More sinisterly, with enough free time and vicious intent, AI can be used unethically, and it has very few limitations. It can power weapons, deepfakes, and hacking tools. It is easy to get caught up in AI, and this can have harmful consequences like emotional damage and misinformation. AI collects massive amounts of data, sometimes without permission, thus raising concerns about surveillance and freedom. These are just the main risks I fear, to name a few.

To give a humane reaction of mine, I recently noticed in pictures that AI struggles to replicate human hands, the very thing that humans were given to 'create' with. AI is edging away at certain art forms, and these so-called creations in which these hands appear are considered art. One of the first records of art was in a cave 67,800 years ago—a simple yet extraordinary painting of a hand. This, to me, proves that AI cannot replicate true art. After all, creation of anything is not about that flawless result you might get from ChatGPT, it's more about expression, about saying 'I was here and I felt something.' This feels almost sacred, as humans continue to create. The depletion of art, any art form at that, would leave many people without jobs. And it would of course leave people without a passion for art, which provides a powerful outlet for self-expression, emotional healing, and deep connection, allowing individuals to process complex feelings, reduce stress, and find meaning and purpose beyond words. Humans are expressive and create wonderful things, imagine your dream job not existing in the future because of AI? Let that thought sit.

# Death of Critical Thinking

Why is it that book reviews seem to have become surface-level, and nobody seems to think anymore about what they've read? It's not just in the literary world either. It's everywhere. If you've ever been on the platform TikTok, you might have seen the platform called "Booktok", where book lovers from around the world express their love of literature. However, this platform is not shy of controversies. Whether it is over AI or just creators voicing unpopular opinions, an argument which seems to be constant is whether or not critical thinking is dead.

Artificial intelligence is supposed to have made our lives easier. But the downside of this excess technology is abundantly clear: its environmental and educational impact. This is evident in the copious amounts of water it needs to operate, bearing in mind that one single 100-word email prompt to ChatGPT consumes over one bottle of water. Alarmingly, according to recent studies, literacy rates are plummeting. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentage of U.S. adults ages 16 to 65 who fall in the lowest level of literacy has increased from 19% in 2017 to a staggering 28% in 2023.

Yes, of course, some things may have become easier. But how easy can things be before we become totally inept? AI websites which summarise text have become commonplace, with many different ones existing; apparently, everything can now be summarised in just one click. Rather than simply reading a novel and writing an essay as assigned, many students will simply have an AI model summarise the novel and generate an essay for them. We must realise that all this affects people's ability to think critically and problem-solve in the real world. This overuse of AI causes a total over-reliance on technology. The Oxford University Press found that six in ten students thought AI had negatively impacted their schoolwork. I fear that if everyone uses AI for everything, I fear everyone will believe what the Bot tells them, and no one will be able to think for themselves.

When problematic opinions are shared online, people can become trapped in echo chambers of harmful thoughts. This was apparent in the way that famous author J.K. Rowling's harmful opinions affected the trans community. From interacting with a post here and there to making her own toxic tweets, and even funding anti-trans organisations, which damages trans communities and makes it harder to gain access to gender-affirming care.

Influencers or creators can virtually create echo chambers resembling marketplaces by using imperatives such as "Buy this product! Order this!" which, of course, are clearly damaging and wasteful. One of the most popular echo chambers is makeup and skincare. Constantly buying and sharing over-consumption can be destructive to people like you and me. Beauty influencers continually receive public relations packages from makeup brands, with all shades of a product in boxes that are twice the size that they need to be. We must consider the plastic waste and CO2 emissions from transport. If we listen to these echo chambers, we may become a shell for a corporation, mindlessly buying things we simply don't need.

We aren't thinking enough about all of the media we consume. We may use words like amazing or horrendous, but we don't always think about the nuances of what we have consumed. Take the novel "Emma" by Jane Austen as an example. Austen herself said that Emma would be a character only she would probably like, but reviews online have missed this entirely and take their dislike of the character to mean they dislike the novel. If we don't think critically about the content we consume, we'll never be able to express our preferred interests in media, and our imagination will automatically become less active.

So what can be done before our brains are fried by not thinking critically? All we have to do is just think. Use our brains. Question stuff we see online or on TV. Express our opinions about the media. I'm not saying we need to write a two-page essay on our thoughts, but maybe just write one thing we like and one thing we dislike about a film. I began doing this a few months ago, and I feel I understand myself and my tastes so much better now. Just make sure not to ask that Chatbot!

By Lily McDaid



# Social Media Ban for Under 16s?

## “We should not ban Social Media for Under 16s”, by Rhéa McLaughlin

A social media ban would not be at all beneficial. In fact, instead of improving mental health, helping people connect, and preventing children from seeing inappropriate content, I feel it would have the complete opposite effect. Of course, many adults think that we only use social media to mindlessly scroll, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Social media gives us a safe space to express ourselves, to learn new things, and to find people who have gone through similar situations as we have. So why should we take it away?

Social media is a learning tool. For many students, TikTok isn't just about entertainment—it can actually help us to study. There are so many accounts out there that provide useful study tips and explain different topics. I found TikTok to be a huge help while I was studying for my Junior Cert last year. I followed accounts that taught history and maths in a different way, which made everything so much more accessible and easier to remember. Banning social media would put us at an extreme disadvantage. It is such a good educational resource. So why should we take it away?

Social media keeps us connected with our friends and family. A social media ban could leave many people feeling totally isolated. Social media gives us the opportunity to stay in contact with our friends during school holidays and to speak to family or friends who live in different parts of the world all year round. In fact, 74% of teenagers say that social media makes them feel more connected with their friends. So why should we take it away?

Sixty per cent of young people in Ireland recently revealed that social media has positively impacted their lives. There are so many people out there who are struggling with mental health problems, and it can be hard to talk to people face-to-face about this. Social media gives us the chance to speak about things in a different way. Instead of having to say things out loud, being able to text someone can feel much easier and less scary than having to say it aloud. So why should we take it away?

Some people worry that social media can be harmful, but instead of banning it, we need to teach people how to use it safely and responsibly. Fifty-five per cent of Irish teenagers have said that they are concerned about their social media usage. This shows that we are willing to learn about how to use social media more safely in order to benefit us all. So why should we take it away?

Of course, I understand that adults have concerns around the use of social media, particularly underage usage, but we have to be realistic because an outright ban simply will not work. People will always find ways around it. To be honest, I think it will lead to young people accessing even more inappropriate content because their social media profiles will have no choice but to be set to an older age. So why should we take it away?

We must consider how an EU ban will affect the future of the young people today and tomorrow. We need to ensure that we provide them with all the tools they need. We all want young people to be able to develop and flourish. A complete ban would clearly be a backward step. Social media is an amazing tool for young people.

So why should we take it away?

## “We should ban Social Media for Under 16s”, by Fódhla McGinley

I firmly believe that social media should be banned for under-16s. Social media can be a very dangerous place, especially for young people. Our profiles can be accessed by any and all kinds of people, and in some cases, this can be a real threat.

The internet is simply not a suitable place for children to roam free. Limits and restrictions applied by parents may help this, but they will never fully resolve this issue. That is why it is now time for the EU to take action and ban social media for our most vulnerable citizens.

Most of us have close relationships with under-16s, whether it's a daughter, nephew, or friend. We all see firsthand how social media can adversely affect their developing minds. According to the most recent studies, people's minds actually don't stop developing until they're at least 25 years old. So it follows that exposure to the world of social media before the age of 16 may severely corrupt developing minds. At the age of 16, young people should be more equipped to make the right decisions and act responsibly online.

In the past, children who were brought up without social media didn't care so much about how their images or the latest fashion trends looked, as they weren't exposed to them through addictive apps like TikTok or Instagram. Nowadays, children as young as 9 and 10 years old are preoccupied with their appearance. This is extremely unhealthy and is certainly not the way to experience your formative years.

It appears young people today are obsessed with having ‘the ideal body’; for boys, being tall and muscular, and for girls, being small and skinny. Social media reinforces that this is the norm; this adversely affects all minds, but especially young ones. Young boys feel the need to buy protein powders to gain muscle mass, while young girls are starving themselves and developing eating disorders while trying to be skinnier.

Attention spans can also be severely affected by social media. Many young people spend hours of the day watching short 15-second videos on TikTok, while unwittingly training their brains to get bored after those 15 seconds are up. This negatively impacts children's academic success and can cause them to fall behind in schoolwork. Not only can this “doomscrolling” affect attention spans, but it also affects how well a person sleeps at night. Many studies have shown that the blue light emitted from your device is extremely harmful, especially when you're going to sleep. It keeps your brain awake for longer and causes you to miss out on essential restorative rest. While the light from your phone doesn't directly correlate with social media, 95% of young people are on their phones before bed. I always feel that I've gotten a better night's sleep if I read a book before bed rather than scrolling on TikTok.

Some may say that banning social media wouldn't help with these issues, but I believe that social media is where all these issues originate, and all these issues can be prevented if the Irish government would just step up and make this ban happen.

As Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, so wisely stated: “Parents, not algorithms, should be raising our children.”



# Letters to the Editor

## MFL Provision in MCC



Sir,

I am a Transition Year student at Merville Community College, and I wish to draw your attention to a matter that concerns me greatly. It is in relation to the limited availability of the Spanish language in our school curriculum. Currently, Spanish is only offered to students in Transition Year and Sixth Year Leaving Cert Applied, leaving out any state examination year groups.

I understand that introducing an additional language requires careful planning and resources; yet, I believe this situation is quite unfair. It restricts students' access to learning a foreign language spoken by over 600 million people across various countries today.

I firmly believe that incorporating Spanish as an option for both Junior Cert and Leaving Cert students would not only provide valuable subject choices but also attract more students to enrol at Merville Community College.

Yours etc.

Ellie McDaid

## School Library



Sir,

I am a Transition Year student at Merville Community College and today I'm writing this letter in relation to equipping a full library in our school. Books are a great way to explore new worlds and learn about stories that you may never experience. The English classrooms in our school all have books, but how amazing would it be if there were one collective area where all students could go and actually read them?

A library would be an ideal place for people to read, obviously, but substitute teachers could also take students there to read for a class if there was no work assigned by the absent teacher. School copies of studied plays and novels could reside in a library if not in use; it could also hold all textbooks, and students could leave old novels that they no longer need. A library would also help people like me, who don't have many friends or those who don't really like the hustle and bustle of school life. I imagine Student Council members, student leaders, TY mentors, or even a dedicated group of interested students could help manage the library.

I hope that you will take my idea into consideration. I believe that a library would be a great asset to our school. We have a designated space; now is the time to make this essential facility a reality.

Thank you for reading this.

Yours etc.

Lily McDaid (TYC)

## Mobile Phone Restrictions



Sir,

I am a Transition Year student at Merville Community College, and I am writing to express some concerns that I feel need to be addressed.

While I fully understand that strict phone policies are implemented to foster inclusivity, enhance students' social skills, and maintain a work-focused school environment, I believe there are significant drawbacks to restricting access to phones.

Having our phones available is crucial for communication with family in case of emergencies, especially during travel to and from school. Last year, many students used their phones for easy access to health-related information, organisation, schoolwork, and more. In the classroom, most students require access to research materials for exams, Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs), and other school-related tasks. Before the ban, easy access to content was not an issue, regardless of whether Chromebooks were booked or not. Now, it has become a constant struggle for teachers to ensure that the best research options are available to their students.

Many people overlook the fact that social media can be beneficial; it often brings us closer together. It serves as a great tool for communication with friends and family over long distances. Additionally, it can assist in organising group work and promoting punctuality. Students can support one another with homework, share resources, and discuss assignments. Some students may struggle to make friends or deal with social anxiety, so it's not fair to force them into social situations. Personally, having my phone helped me build social connections during my first year, as I was quite shy. For some, interacting online may feel more comfortable than face-to-face communication. Instead of eliminating social media for students, I believe we, as a school community, should incorporate it, as social media and online presence continue to grow. Many modern careers require skills in social media, online communication, and working behind a screen.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering this important issue.

Yours etc.

Daisy McSkeane

## Economics in Schools



Sir,

I believe that Economics should be offered to all Leaving Cert students as an alternative to LCVP. This subject encompasses a wide range of topics and is hugely relevant to everyday life.

By teaching Economics, we can equip students with valuable knowledge that enhances their understanding of the world, enabling them to make informed decisions that positively impact their lives and enrich their education.

Recently, I embarked on a journey to educate myself in Economics, and it has significantly transformed my comprehension of various issues, making complex topics clearer and far less intimidating. Introducing Economics will render complex subjects much more accessible for future Leaving Cert students.

Yours etc.,

Liam Heyneke

# School Without Phones

A school survey was conducted recently to assess viewpoints on whether the mobile phone ban, introduced in September 2025, has improved or disimproved school life. The findings provide clear insights into student feelings, revealing diverse opinions on this controversial issue. The phone ban has significantly affected students, with many advocating for phones as essential tools for documenting trips, activities, and classes requiring research. This is particularly relevant for Junior Cycle CBAs and Senior Cycle coursework, which can account for up to 40% of final grades.

A total of 105 students participated in the survey. The results are as follows: Only 21.9% of students felt that the phone ban improved school life, while a notable 81.9% believed it had a negative impact. 2% of students reported feeling more distracted in class, whereas 6.7% felt much less distracted. Meanwhile, 56.2% responded with “per chance.” 16.2% of students felt school has become more sociable due to the phone ban. In contrast, 41% disagreed with this suggestion, and 42.9% described school life as now being “a bit more” sociable.

## *Missed Assignments and announcements*

An overwhelming 88.6% of students (93) indicated they have missed assignments and announcements on Google Classroom, compared to only 11.4% (12 students) who reported not missing anything at all.

Additionally, 28.6% of students (30) mentioned they sometimes miss tasks assigned on Google Classroom due to a lack of access in school, 7.6% (8 students) stated they haven’t faced this issue, and 63.8% (67 students) confirmed they have missed numerous assigned tasks.

The survey revealed that 16.2% of students (17) occasionally bring their phones to school, 9.5% (10 students) do not bring theirs, and a majority of 74.3% (78 students) bring their phones daily.

## *Conclusions*

Overall, the responses indicate that students are negatively affected by the phone ban. They expressed genuine concerns about decreased attentiveness in class and that missing Google Classroom assignments and notifications has become commonplace. This suggests that most students feel disadvantaged and they feel it may be worth considering revisiting the policy of restricted usage in schools going forward.

To gain another perspective, teachers were also asked about their views on how the phone ban has influenced school life. The ban has significantly affected students, and it was very interesting to learn how educators perceive its impact on their daily teaching experiences.

A total of 26 teachers participated in the survey. The findings reveal that a huge majority of teachers (96.2%) felt the phone ban has improved school life, while only 3.8% disagreed, stating it has worsened the situation. Regarding distraction levels, 92.3% reported that students are noticeably less distracted in class, while 7.7% observed no change. In terms of interaction skills, 61.5% noticed improved interaction skills among students and teachers, 30.8% found that students are more sociable with their classmates, and 7.7% reported no difference in social interactions.

As for Google Classroom engagement, 38.5% reported that no posts have been missed due to the phone ban, 38.5% indicated that sometimes posts are missed, and 23.1% said that many posts are being missed as a result of the ban.

Regarding the usefulness of phones for education 50% believe that phones are only occasionally useful for educational purposes 7.7% said they are rarely beneficial, another 7.7% feel phones are regularly useful, 34.6% believe that phones are useful, but only in specific lessons.

## *Conclusions*

Overall, these findings suggest that the phone ban has had a largely positive impact on school life from teachers’ perspectives. An overwhelming majority of teachers reported improvements in the overall learning environment, particularly noting reduced student distraction and improved focus during lessons. Enhanced social interactions were also evident, with many teachers observing stronger communication between students and increased engagement with both peers and staff.

However, the results also highlight some challenges associated with the ban, particularly in relation to digital communication and Google Classroom engagement. While some teachers reported no negative effects, others indicated that important posts are occasionally or frequently missed, suggesting a need for alternative communication strategies to ensure students remain informed.

Teachers’ mixed views on the educational usefulness of phones indicate that while mobile devices can support learning in certain contexts, they are not regarded as essential for everyday teaching. Taken together, these findings imply that the phone ban has generally enhanced the school environment, but its effectiveness could be further improved by increased provision of technology such as Chromebooks or iPads where funding permits.



# Moville win U-14 A Crown



Moville U-14s celebrate their U-14 A Championship title

Moville U-14 footballers are celebrating their historic U-14 A championship final win over Ardara at the Donegal Training Centre, in Convoy. Mark Faulkner, Oisín O'Hare, Finn Kealey and Sean McColl scored the goals in the three-point win over the south-west lads. In a brilliant game of football, played under floodlights, Moville won the club's first-ever underage A championship title. They have now joined Buncrana and Carndonagh as the only Inishowen clubs to win Donegal underage club A football championships. Joint captains Mark Faulkner and Oisín O'Hare, along with other goalscorers Finn Kealey, Parker Craig and Jack Gill, were also among the point scorers for the first-time U-14 A champions. "It is a huge achievement for Moville to win an underage championship and, obviously, a big boost for the club and for Inishowen football overall. And to beat a big traditional club like Ardara is a wonderful achievement," Moville club chairman Sean Faulkner stated. "They also won the Division One U-14 League. They beat another big club, Gaoth Dobhair, in the league final and they also beat Gaoth Dobhair in the championship. They also won the Joe McGeady Cup here in Inishowen and are unbeaten all season. They are a quality side and a very talented, well-coached group of footballers. The success really is all down to the dedication of their coaches Eamonn Reddin, David Lee and my brother Gerard Faulkner."

They have been working with these lads since they were six years of age, which goes to show that hard work pays off and we can build on this success now long into the future. Moville got the final off to a great start and led 2-2 to 0-1 at the end of the first quarter hour, courtesy of a goal each from Sean McCool and Mark Faulkner, and points from Jack Gill and Mark Faulkner. Moville took a commanding six-point lead to the dressing room at half-time. They led 4-3 to 2-3. Faulkner, with his second green flag, and Finn Kealey scored the other Moville goal. A goal and two points from midfielder Oisín O'Hare settled Moville, and despite Ardara cutting the lead to two in the final quarter, the leaders pushed on as Mark Faulkner brought down the curtain on the scoring with the game's last point and a deserved win.

Moville scorers: Mark Faulkner 2-3, Oisín O'Hare 1-3, Finn Kealey 1-1, Sean McCool 1-0, Jack Gill 0-1, Parker Craig 0-1 each.

Moville: Matthew Doherty; Charlie O'Donnell, Gavin McGill, Harry McDaid; Noah Mason, Harry McHenry Pike, Micheal Keogh; Oisín O'Hare, Tony Reddin; Sean McCool, Finn Kealey, Jack Gill; Ben McLaughlin, Mark Faulkner, Parker Craig.

Subs: Tiernan Doherty, Finn Diver, Evan Doherty, Louis McLaughlin, Adam Marston, Conan McLaughlin.



## GET UP, GET OUT, GET WALKING.

"Going for a walk is a fantastic, simple way to boost your health, offering benefits like better stamina, heart health, and mood."





# Athletics



Oirghiall Curran



Senior Boys Team

Congratulations to all the students who participated in the Donegal Schools' Cross Country in Carndonagh Community School. The event was a tremendous success, highlighted by Oirghiall Curran's impressive 2nd-place finish in the 2nd Year boys' competition. Our teams also excelled, with the Senior Boys earning gold medals, the 1st and 2nd Year Girls securing 2nd place, and the 2nd and 3rd Year Boys achieving 3rd place in their respective team events. The second event was in Finn Valley, Stranorlar on January 21st. Well done to all of our athletes: A special mention to Owen Lynch, who finished an impressive 4th place in the Intermediate Boys, along with strong runs from Senan Doyle, Anna Lynch, and Caitlin Harvey in their respective races.

#### Team Results

- Intermediate Girls – 3rd Overall
- Intermediate Boys – 3rd Overall
- Senior Boys – 1st Overall

We spoke to Peter O'Gorman about the team's achievements. "It's a very tough sport mentally because it's just you against your mind. You just kind of have to get into a rhythm and just follow that. It's always good to have a goal when you're running. I like to focus on catching the man just ahead of me instead of worrying about coming first. Our coaches Ms McDaid and Ms Cavanagh are very good, they're always very supportive. The other athletes from our school who aren't running at the same time as you are also very supportive from the sidelines, they're always very encouraging which helps you to keep going when it gets tough. MCC's results at Cross Country are very impressive because we usually do really well, even though running wouldn't be our main sport in the school. We've definitely had rough days, which can make it a lot harder. We just got very lucky on the day as the conditions weren't too bad."

## All Ireland Gold Medal for Oirghiall Curran

Second Year Oirghiall Curran won a gold medal in the 800 metres All-Ireland Final in Tullamore in June. Oirghiall told us he was very surprised to win. "I thought I was fully out of the race until there was around 300m left and I felt strong enough to finish it." He further stated that it didn't hit him that he had won until an hour after the race had ended.

Oirghiall trains a lot throughout the week. On Tuesday he does speed-based training, mainly 200 metre timed reps. Thursday is for endurance and is spent running long distances without stopping. Finally, on Saturday Oirghiall does race pace runs, running 800m, 1000m or 1500m at race speed. On the days in between he does some 'easy' 3-mile runs.

Recovery is very important for an athlete, Oirghiall stated; "If you're not well rested and well fed you can't perform."

Oirghiall's dad and his brother Dallan inspire him the most. His father was a runner when he was younger and this is what made Oirghiall want to get into running in the first place. Dallan is always working so hard that it spurs Oirghiall on to be the best version of himself. Although they are siblings, the rivalry is kept to a minimum and they are always out running together. Both boys consistently win their separate competitions; "Dallan and I are the speedsters."

Oirghiall's favourite win was in a Donegal Primary Schools competition in Buncrana. He was in second place and had accepted his position. That was until the boy ahead of him began to celebrate too early and Oirghiall just ran straight past him, claiming the victory.

Oirghiall advises anyone wishing to start athletics to train hard "It gets harder the more you do it but you just have to keep going."



Oirghiall wins gold medal in Tullamore

# Wesley wins National Bronze Medal

Huge congratulations to Wesley Zhen, a fifth-year student, who secured a bronze medal at the All-Ireland Judo Championships on Saturday, December 13th, at the National Sports Centre in Abbottstown, Dublin. Wesley is now officially a member of the Irish National Judo Team. We had the opportunity to speak with him about his recent victory, and here's what he shared:

Wesley began his judo journey in the second year at the age of 15, just after COVID. Initially, he participated as an after-school hobby. However, when Mr Gallagher, his PE teacher, discovered Wesley lived in Derry, he encouraged him to try out for his club. What began as a pastime gradually turned into a deep passion.

“The moment I realised I had won the bronze medal at the national level felt like a miracle,” Wesley explained. There were five competitors in his category, with one gold, one silver, and two bronze medals available. At that time, he had already lost two out of his four fights. The boy he faced had also lost twice and had lost hope, but Wesley remained determined. He felt a mix of relief and pain, and while he did beat him, his other matches were less successful. Wesley criticised himself for making some beginner mistakes and hesitating too long during fights.

Currently, Wesley trains in judo twice a week, complimented by gym sessions. The training is intense; sweating profusely and feeling sore the next day is all part of the process. As competitions approach, the focus shifts to tactical scenarios, whether ahead by a point or working on both defensive and offensive strategies. The intensity ramps up, with more throws, counterattacks, and defence drills at a fast pace. On the final training day before a competition, they take it easy to prevent injuries.

Balancing training and academics is challenging for Wesley. He often completes homework at school, during homework club, or at home when he can. Sometimes, he takes breaks from training when tests are approaching. This leads to an imbalance, as he juggles various responsibilities throughout the week and weekends.

His coaches, family, and teammates have all played crucial roles in his judo journey. His family supports his sporting endeavours, coaches teach him new skills, and teammates train alongside him, helping him improve and work on his weaknesses.

Judo has allowed Wesley to reflect on his past actions and has significantly boosted his confidence in social interactions. It has taught him that there's no need to feel embarrassed and has helped him maintain physical fitness. His advice to anyone considering starting judo is to be prepared for losses. Some individuals struggle to recover from the mental impact of a single defeat. Wesley advises training hard, taking things seriously, heeding others' advice, valuing those close to you, and most importantly, prioritising self-care and self-reflection. His future goals include training harder to reach the next level and perfecting his judo style. Next, he aims to win a silver medal. We wish him the very best of luck with this.



Wesley, far right, receiving his bronze medal  
Mr S Gallagher PE teacher and mentor congratulates Wesley on his achievement

“Wesley dedicates a significant amount of time to judo training, attending sessions in Derry five nights a week—three of which focus on judo and the other two on strength and conditioning.” “Coaching judo is something I truly love. It’s fantastic to see others enjoying judo as much as I do.” “I wholeheartedly recommend that everyone should give judo a try. It boosts confidence and ensures you have the skills to defend yourself when necessary.” “I began my judo journey at the age of 12, inspired by my uncle showing me ‘Enter the Dragon.’” “I even won an All-Ireland title at university.” Competing at this level requires immense discipline, and Wesley embodies that quality. I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.



Wesley receives his national bronze medal

# Boys' Football

## First Year Boys Miss Out on Penalties in Thrilling Final Tie

Moville Community College had a strong start against Scoil Mhuire, taking an early lead when Cormac Keaveney scored in the first half. Moville dominated most of the half, creating numerous chances and keeping Scoil Mhuire under pressure. Although Scoil Mhuire attempted to regain control, they struggled to penetrate Moville's solid defence. Early in the second half, Moville extended their lead to 2–0 with a goal from Ben McLaughlin, which provided a significant boost and seemed likely to secure their victory.

However, with about fifteen minutes remaining, Scoil Mhuire managed to score, dramatically shifting the momentum of the game. Shortly thereafter, a player from Scoil Mhuire received a red card, but even with a man down, they continued to fight hard. In a thrilling conclusion, Scoil Mhuire found the net again with the final kick of the match, equalising and forcing the game into extra time.

During extra time, Scoil Mhuire missed a penalty, shooting wide, leading to a penalty shootout. Moville's goalkeeper, Aodhan Morrison, saved one penalty, but Moville missed three of their own attempts, allowing Scoil Mhuire to triumph in this incredibly dramatic but ultimately disappointing encounter.

By Ronan Doherty and Reuben Craig



First Year boys team



Finn and Tony



Goal Scorers

## Oisín plays for Ireland U14s



Oisín O'Hare was one of three players selected by his coaches at Inishowen to go for U14 Ireland trials in Mullingar. There were 6 rounds of trials. The first cut was down to 60 people, then 18.

Over the summer, Oisín played 6 matches for Ireland. He was a starting left-winger for the team in all of these matches, wearing number 11. Two of these were friendlies against Cork City U15s and Waterford FC U15s. The next four matches were part of the Associations Cup. The tournament was played in Allen Park, Co. Antrim. In this, they played against Jersey, Isle of Man, Scotland, and Wales. They won all of these matches convincingly, winning the tournament for Ireland. Oisín scored 5 goals in this tournament. His best memory of the tournament was “scoring a goal in the final.”

Oisín has no plans to continue playing with Ireland as, in order to play for any age group above U15s, you have to play for a League of Ireland team. Instead, he is going to continue playing with Greencastle FC. This will allow him to spend more time on his GAA. Oisín enjoyed playing with Ireland; he made loads of new friends and “wouldn't change a thing” about the experience. However, it restricted him from putting as much effort as he would want into GAA, which is his personal preference.



Ireland U 14s

# Girls' Sporting Success

## First Year Girls Soccer



MCC First Year Girls Team

Congratulations to our first-year girls' soccer team for their impressive victory against Carndonagh. They showcased a strong performance throughout the field, with goals scored by Alannah Doherty, Caitlin Atherton, Lily Reynolds, Sophie Duffy, and Natalie O'Hara. Our win was further sweetened by the chance to meet our local hero, Donegal star player Conor O'Donnell, at Centra after the match.

We spoke to goalscorer Lily Reynolds about this match. "I wasn't nervous to play this match, our team works really well together. Our passing and shooting is very reliable and we've got a strong defence. It was inspiring to meet Conor."

## U15 Girls Soccer

Our U15 Girls contested a tight battle against a strong Loreto Milford team. The game ended in a draw with a goal apiece. Adah Gill was on the scoresheet for Merville. The girls were then victorious against St Louis Monaghan in the Ulster Quarter-Final with a 5-2 victory. Goal scorers were: Maya Barr, Caoimhe Harkin, Faye McClenaghan, and Adah Gill. We wish the girls the best of luck in the semi-final! We talked to Adah Gill about this match "The match started off really tight, it was 2-2 at half time but we were strong in the second half and scored 3 goals while they didn't score any. Our defence was really solid."



MCC U15 Girls Team

## U17 Girls Soccer



MCC U17 Girls team

Huge congratulations to our Under 17 Girls for an outstanding performance. Every player gave it their all and showed great teamwork and determination.

Merville goalscorers on the day were: Evangeline McDermott, Cara McKinney, Nicole Barr, Emer Reynolds, Grace McDonald and Ella Havlin

We spoke to Mary O'Gorman and Emer Reynolds about the match. "The other team put in a really solid effort, they kept until the very end. Our defence was just really strong."

"It was a good day out. I really enjoyed playing the match."

# Ulster Shield Final Runners Up



MCC Senior Girls' Ulster shield final Runers-Up

Our Senior Girls' GAA team made it to the school's Ulster shield final in Cookstown Co. Tyrone against St. Marks Warrenpoint. Merville's girls' senior team have not been in a final for quite some time, which made this match even more exciting and also nerve-racking for the whole team. The longer that we were on the bus the more anxious I became about the match. It is hard to stay positive before a big game when you know how important it is. What made it worse was that we had no idea what team we were coming up against, so we did not know if it was going to be a tight match or not.

The team was then named 20 minutes before we got to the pitch, Ms O'Hare shouted out the names starting with number 1- Amber McColgan, 2-Blathnaid Doherty, 3-Jenny McLaughlin, 4-Emma Kelly, 5-Orla Cavanagh, 6-Tiana Reddin, 7-Una Peto, 8- Clara Boyle (captain), 9- Gracie Boyle, 10- Sinead Cavanagh, 11-Carla McDermott, 12-Cara Harkin, 13-Khloe Henry, 14-Evangeline McDermott and 15-Fodhla McGinley.

Shortly after, we arrived at the pitch, went to the changing rooms, got ready and headed straight out to the astro pitch we were playing on. It was already freezing outside and then the rain started to come down as well. We were the first team out, so we started our warmup and practiced our shooting. Soon the referee came out, and it was still pouring down with rain. Then the other team made their way onto the pitch and behind them was a large group of supporters from their school. Ms O'Hare and Ms Mulhall then called us over for a team talk, we stood in our huddle whilst they were telling us about the tactics for the game, then the captain, Clara, provided encouraging words, and we were ready to go.

The conditions were unbelievably bad throughout the whole game, which made it hard to play in. When the ball was thrown up St. Mark's got a hold of the ball and scored the first point of the game. This kicked us into gear, and we realised that it was not going to be an easy match. Then Amber McColgan had a great kick out, and we were on the attack. I was then in possession of the ball and did a great kick pass to Clara who then sent the ball up to Evangeline McDermott and she struck the ball extremely hard from distance and scored an amazing goal.

We soon realised that it would be impossible for only one or two people to run the pitch so instead everyone had to work together to get a score. Then it was half time and everyone was freezing and soaked, we were down by 7 points, and it was hard to stay positive as everyone's hands had gone numb and we just wanted the rain and wind to stop. Ms O'Hare then exclaimed how important it was to get the first score when we went back out and that we had to stay positive because we were only down by a couple of points. A couple of the players said that we should be hand passing when we can instead of kick passing, because the wind was so strong it was hard to judge where and how hard to hit the ball.

Mrs Muhall then reassured us this game was still very winnable and not to let our heads drop. We soon went back out for the second half and had to face the awful weather again. The scores were going back and forth until St. Marks got a good lead and ran away with game, because it was so cold it was hard to even catch the ball. We never stopped trying throughout the whole match which was good and we scored a few points here and there. When the match was ending the rain was still lashing down and everyone was very cold. The whistle blew and the match was over, we were very disappointed with the end score as we did not think it reflected on how well we played, it was very unfortunate that the weather was so bad as it impacted our performance a lot, but even though we lost we were so proud to have reached the school's Ulster final,

We would like to thank all the girls who participated through the whole season and to Ms O'Hare for dedicating her time and helping us to reach the final, we hope we will be the winners next year!



By Gracie Boyle

# New Manager for Moville Celtic



Moville Celtic Club Management Team with Martin Rea second on the left

## Rea on right track towards rebuilding Moville Celtic

Five years on from his last casting as Moville Celtic manager, highly-regarded Scotsman Martin Rea has his sights set on successful times ahead, as he looks to get Moville Celtic back on track.

Martin, a great servant to the club already, won promotion to the Premier League following an unbeaten season throughout Division One back in 2019 as coach, alongside manager John L Coyle.

He labels the first 6-8 months of his reappointment at Glencrow as “stressful,” and states how he has an “immense responsibility.”

When asked about the motivational factor regarding his return, Martin explained how seeing Moville Celtic relegated to a lowly Division Two “hit him personally” and led him to feel that he had “something to offer.”

His return was also prompted by a hint of devotion, as he smiles: “You’re a Glasgow Celtic fan in the womb, I was aware of Moville Celtic before I even knew about the Inishowen league!”

This team, which he describes as “explosive and structured”, certainly appears to be heading in the right direction again, as they currently sit top of Division Two, unbeaten and on track for promotion, which in Martin’s eyes is the main goal for the season.

He demands hard work from his players and expects high standards, using past disappointment to further motivate his team.

When questioned about ambitions for the club, Martin states clearly how they “won’t settle for quick fixes” – and he views the rebuilding of Moville Celtic as a “long-term project”, with the priority being a return to the Premier League, which Moville last won way back in the mid-1990s.

Rea also praises the Moville Celtic hierarchy for doing “great things with the kids” and he’s now assistant Head of Youth Development, alongside Charlie Gill. The youth are the future.

“Within five years, I hope to see those players, who are playing for the U12s and U13s now, playing for the reserves and first team,” Martin added.

The future certainly looks bright for Moville Celtic with Rea back on board.

By Harry Connaughton



Sport Extra

# MCC Darts



Rhys McGeoghan receives his individual award



MCC Darts Team

As part of the LCA Practical Achievement Task, Rhys, Jack, and Darragh have formed a darts team. They participated in their inaugural tournament at Carndonagh Community School on Monday, November 17th. The students competed against three other schools from Inishowen. The members of the MCC team were Rhys McGeoghan, Callum McDaid, Jack McDaid, TJ Burns, Jude Hannaway, Kade Kearney, Caiden McLaughlin, and Patrick Barr. Congratulations to everyone involved!



MCC Golfers

## Sport and Extra Curriculars News



Well done to our U15s who were victorious against St. Louis Monaghan 5-2 in the Ulster ¼ Final. The 4 goal scorers were:

- ⚽ Maya Barr
- ⚽ Caoimhe Harkin
- ⚽ Faye McClenaghan
- ⚽ Adah Gill



Many thanks to Ms E. Hegarty for leading the Transition Year students to the beach for a rejuvenating mindful yoga session. As a skilled yoga instructor, Ms Hegarty provided an experience that our TY students thoroughly enjoyed.



Congratulations to Faye, Emily, Alannah & Grace who played for Donegal U14 Girls in a pair of challenge matches against Derry 🤗💚💚

## MCC Golf Team Gears Up for Success

We talked to team member Conan McLaughlin about the most recent competitions “It was quite an early start as the competition was in Gweedore. We had to be in school at 6.45 am so we could leave at 7 sharp. When we got there, we were split up into groups of 3 or 4, mixed in with the other schools. The weather was awful, it was wet and miserable with the typical Gweedore wind so we ended up only being able to play 15 holes which was a bit disappointing. When we were finished we had a presentation, but unfortunately no one from MCC won anything. Although the day wasn't as good as it could have been I still really enjoyed it.”



A very big thank you to GMC Golf for hosting our TY students and giving them the opportunity to try golf for the first time! 🏌️‍♀️🏌️‍♂️ It's fantastic to see our students embracing new experiences with such enthusiasm and positivity. A special thanks to Greencastle Golf Club, also for hosting. 🌞🌞



CCS Sportshall Athletics. January 2026.

MCC Team Results :

- Intermediate Girls – 3rd Overall
- Intermediate Boys – 3rd Overall
- Senior Boys – 2nd Overall. Well done to all our athletes.