PROSPECTUS
26/27

St. Joseph's Patrician College
'The Bish'

PRINCIPAL'S WELCOME

◂ *Sarah Gleeson (Principal), Barry McDermott and Robert Grealish (Deputy Principals)*

Welcome to St. Joseph's Patrician College, otherwise known as 'The Bish'. Our school was founded in 1862 by Paul O'Connor, a member of the Brothers of Saint Patrick (Patrician Brothers) with funding from the Bishop of Galway, hence the 'Bish' nickname. The Bish is a Catholic all boys voluntary secondary school and welcomes students from all backgrounds, faiths, communities and abilities.

Our school has a long and proud record of high academic achievement, sporting success and cultural engagement deeply rooted in the traditions and values of the Patrician Brothers. Our school motto comes directly from Bishop Daniel Delany, who founded the Brothers in 1808: Love God, work hard and take care of one another. These words continue to guide and inspire us as we provide a safe and happy all-round education for the students in our care. There is a lot of diversity in the school and we pride ourselves on welcoming of people of all cultures and all faiths, and none, while still retaining our catholic ethos.

Saint Joseph's Patrician College is run by a Board of Management under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust which was established in 2008 by 13 religious' congregations, the Patrician's being one of them. We are currently situated in Nuns' Island in the centre of Galway city close to the Cathedral and welcome over 790 students each day to our school. We currently have a planning application lodged with Galway City Council for a new state of the art school building to house 1000 pupils on University of Galway lands at Dangan. We continue to be the number 1 all boys feeder school to University of Galway and the majority of our Leaving Certificate students achieve the College place of their choice. Bish past pupils contribute to the economic, cultural, artistic, sporting and political life, not only of Galway city but also on the national and international stage. All of the above is underpinned by strong relationships between students and staff.

There have been significant changes in the Bish over the past few years. We have expanded our subject options both at Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate level and now have one of the largest offerings of senior cycle subjects in Galway. It is always the intention that students who enrol in St Joseph's Patrician College progress to completing their Leaving Certificate exam. This, with our motto of 'Love God, work hard and take care of one another' allow us to offer a broad, well-rounded education for all of our students, one where positive relationships are to the fore on a daily basis.

We are very proud of these developments and are keen to welcome prospective pupils and parents to the school to get an idea of the positive atmosphere and ethos in the school. This prospectus will help give a small flavour of life in the Bish.

Enjoy reading our prospectus.

DANGAN PROJECT

The Board of Management of St Joseph's Patrician College 'The Bish' Galway, have announced details of the next chapter in the development of the school.

A brand new, state of the art, purpose built and sustainable complex, adjacent to the University of Galway in Dangan, awaits the Bish community as the school looks forward to this highly anticipated move.

The Department of Education has supported the approach of the trustees and Board of Management to relocate to a green field site and in 2021 approved the appointment of a design team who have drawn up plans for a new school at Dangan. The trustees of the Bish have reached an agreement with the University of Galway regarding the move. These discussions have concluded successfully and are enabling us to move forward. The new school will enable the Bish to grow and develop into a fit-for-purpose education campus, providing students with the modern teaching, learning, sporting, recreation, and other facilities needed to achieve their potential.

A planning application was approved in December 2024, the design team have finalised and submitted the plans and we are now waiting for the Department to grant the funding.

We look forward to you joining us on our journey.

ACADEMIA

For over 160 years, we in The Bish have taken great pride in the academic successes of our students. We are the number one feeder school to the University of Galway in the country. Among our most recent Leaving Certificate graduates in 2026, over 33% achieved over 500 points.

JUNIOR CYCLE

From first to third year, all students study Irish, English, Maths, Science, Business Studies, History, Geography, Religious Education, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Physical Education. In addition, students choose two of the following optional subjects – Music, Art, Technology, Technical Graphics, Home Economics. For their language choice (Modern Foreign Language MFL), they will choose between French and Spanish. Class sizes are limited and while we do ask for preferences, we cannot guarantee that all students will get their preferred language choice.

JUNIOR CYCLE WELLBEING

As part of the JC three-year course, all students receive 400 hours of Wellbeing modules to include Digital Literacy, Art and Design, Sports and Nutrition, Guidance, Life Skills, Friends for Life, Mindfulness, Choir and Swimming. These hours also include SPHE, CSPE and PE.

SUBJECT CHOICE & SENIOR CYCLE

At Senior Cycle, students must undertake studies in English, Irish and Maths. They then choose four of the following options (where available): Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Physics with Chemistry, Applied Maths, Agricultural Science, Business, Economics, Accounting, French, History, Geography, Design and Communications Graphics (DCG), Computer Science, Politics and Society, P.E (Exam), Spanish, Music, Technology, Home Economics, Art and LCVP.

NON-EXAMINATION SUBJECTS IN SENIOR CYCLE

Students are required to participate in Physical Education, Religious Education and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE).

LEAVING CERTIFICATE LIFE COMMUNITY AND WORK (LCW FORMERLY LCVP)

LCW is designed to build essential transferable skills (communication, problem-solving, resilience, and collaboration) and prepare students for adult life, employment, apprenticeships, and further or higher education. This is an optional subject for students in addition to their core and choice subjects at 5th and 6th year.

FACILITIES

Our facilities include science labs, computer rooms, graphics rooms, a gymnasium, a weights room, technology room, art room, music room and buses. We also rent sporting facilities in the locality including those in neighbouring University of Galway.

SPORT

The Bish aims to develop the whole person. We hope that our students strive for excellence on the sports field as well as in the classroom. Our school is privileged to have a renowned successful sporting history. There is a wide range of sports to choose from including Football, Hurling, Soccer, Rugby, Rowing, Athletics, Swimming, and Badminton. Teams have enjoyed unprecedented success at international, national and provincial level. The Bish boasts all-Ireland victories in soccer, basketball and rowing in recent years. We encourage everyone to play sport - some try two or three sports in first year. Swimming in 1st year takes place as part of the Physical Education programme.

FAITH & CULTURE

At the core of the ethos of The Bish is that the school should be a place where each student is helped to reach his full potential. Along with academia and sport, an appreciation for culture and the arts is fostered and encouraged as it is an integral part of helping each student to reach his full potential.

EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL TRIPS

There are trips organised annually with the intention of bringing to life what is being taught in the classroom. Trips in recent years include a visit to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, the beaches of Normandy, the Vatican in Rome and the Eiffel Tower in Paris. There are also subject specific trips within Ireland organised by class teachers every year such as trips to Google, Aviva Insurances, the Guinness Brewery, The Dáil and many more. We are also an accredited Erasmus+ school and have undertaken mobility trips to the Czech Republic, Spain and Finland to date.

SKI TRIP

A school ski-trip travels to Europe during the February midterm each year. Students are invited to come along, and the ski resorts visited over the past few years include Sauze D'Ouix, Sestriere, Montgenevre, Sansicario and the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

STUDENT COUNCIL

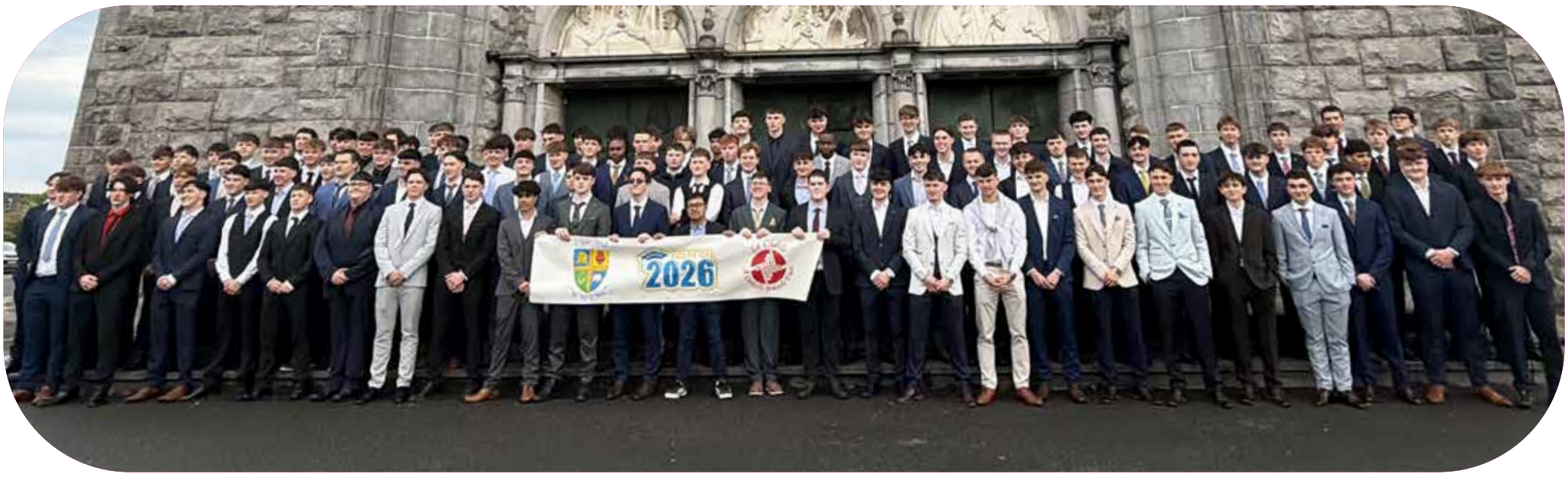
Our Student Council consists of two representatives from each year group. Nominees put themselves forward and are elected by their peers. The Student Council is underpinned by the ISSU charter (Irish Second Level Students' Union) and is an opportunity for the promotion of student voice. Recent accomplishments by the student council include the setting up of a chess-club, a wheelchair basketball workshop, Student ID cards, a Colour Run, a workshop with Médecins Sans Frontières and donations to local charities through money raised by Non-Uniform days. Other cultural events include Languages Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, and BakeOff competitions.

PREFECTS

Since 1975, The Bish has elected Prefects as representatives of the school in 5th and 6th year. These Prefects, alongside the Student Council, work to represent the students in the promotion of student voice. The Prefects become student representatives at all formal occasions. Each prefect brings his own personal strengths to the role, and are proud ambassadors for the school community. Prefects are available to all students and are always happy and willing to help the new students each year settle into the school.

BISH PARENTS' COUNCIL

Bish Parents' Council Bish Parents' Council support the running of the school through various activities. They are involved in all of the major events which happen in the school calendar – incoming induction of first years and leaving certificate graduation mass among others. All major school policies are agreed following consultation with the Parents' Council. There is a small number of fundraising events that the Parents' Council organise throughout the school year however it is not their main focus. Some of their past fundraisers include - Duck Race, Bish Breakfast, Colour Run and The Cube, to name but a few. The Bish Parents' Council also organise the annual Golf AM/ AM which is always a great day for parents, students and the broader Bish Community.



PASTORAL CARE

When you send your son to The Bish, we understand that you are entrusting us to support him as he navigates a time in his life between childhood and becoming an adult. Many teenagers experience difficulties during adolescence and to support your son during these times we have 2 guidance counsellors on staff. They are available to listen to and support your son with any difficulty he may have, whether it is school related or not. The guidance counsellors at The Bish have more available hours per week to meet with students or parents than any other secondary school in the county. If you or your son has any problem during his time at the Bish, you are always welcome to get in touch. As well as the confidential counselling service, the guidance counsellors can also support your son with educational and career guidance in areas such as subject choice and helping him to explore career options.

TRANSITION YEAR

This is an optional year which provides students with an opportunity to develop life skills and to experience subjects before committing themselves to the Leaving Certificate programme. Transition Year was reintroduced to The Bish in September 2018 and has grown each year. Students study core subjects throughout the year as well as sampling all Leaving Certificate optional subjects. Work experience is also a central component of the programme and there are many opportunities to develop additional skills and achievements including Gaisce, Coaching, First Aid and many more. There are a limited number of places available on the programme and students are asked to apply. This is done in their 3rd year.

OUR EXPERIENCES

Following on from the reintroduction of TY there has been a noticeable improvement in the maturity levels of our senior cycle students. The students who have participated in TY are in position to make better subject choices going into 5th year. They are also better equipped to make CAO choices or indeed access future employment opportunities.

AUTISM CLASSROOMS

We now have two Autism classes where students engage in modified programmes of learning. Some of our students split their time between Mainstream Classes and the Autism Classes with the support of SNAs (Special Needs Assistants). Many of our students engage in the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate syllabi as well as the L1LP (Level 1 Learning Programme) and L2LP (Level Two Learning Programme). We also have a wonderful sensory area for students and a sensory pod. Murphy, our Community Dog, also spends time in the Autism classes. Applicants for the Autism classes require a letter of eligibility from the NCSE.

ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Bish prides itself on providing in class supports and additional tuition for students with additional educational needs. On entry into the school, our dedicated SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinating Officer) liaises with parents and students to ensure that the student is supported throughout their time in the school.

MURPHY, OUR COMMUNITY DOG

In August 2026, we welcomed a new and very popular member of staff – Murphy. Trained by the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind, Murphy has been a great addition to our school. He spends time in both the Autism classes and the mainstream school and is happiest with his teddy bear and squeaky toys.

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