



Prospectus 2026  
stmaryscbgs.com



TRUST - RESPECT - EQUALITY



# Welcome from the Principal

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As the Principal of St. Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School, it is an incredible honour for me to introduce our prospectus, designed to provide readers with a flavour of life at St. Mary's. St. Mary's has a highly committed staff, who are unified in their vision to make St. Mary's the best school that it can possibly be. We are the only grammar school for boys in West Belfast. Our ambition is to ensure that we are a school our entire community is proud of and that we are the destination of choice for all boys who aspire to a grammar school education in the west of our city.

St. Mary's was founded by the Christian Brothers in 1866. Since then, we have established proud traditions of exceptional pastoral care, excellence in teaching and learning and social justice advocacy. Our core values - 'Trust, Respect and Equality' - permeate every aspect of life in our school. We are blessed with an impressive and attractive school site, comprising fantastically well-resourced learning spaces and extensive sporting facilities. We have recently received approval for the development of a new state-of-the-art sports hall. This exciting addition will enhance the opportunities we can offer our pupils and the wider community.

Our curriculum fully delivers the Entitlement Framework and more. It ensures that our pupils flourish, and through personalised pathways, they can achieve all they are capable of and become everything they aspire to be. Our approach to maximising pupil attainment includes wrap-around academic support. To achieve this, we prioritise high levels of parental engagement, pupil support programmes and robust academic monitoring.

We pride ourselves on the exceptionally high levels of pastoral care we provide for our pupils. Our staff are deeply invested in the holistic development of each pupil under our care. This care extends well beyond our classrooms and teachers. At St. Mary's, we foster meaningful relationships with our pupils, based on mutual respect, high expectations of one another and resilience.

We seek opportunities to celebrate the successes of our pupils wherever possible, enhancing their self-esteem, confidence and ambition.

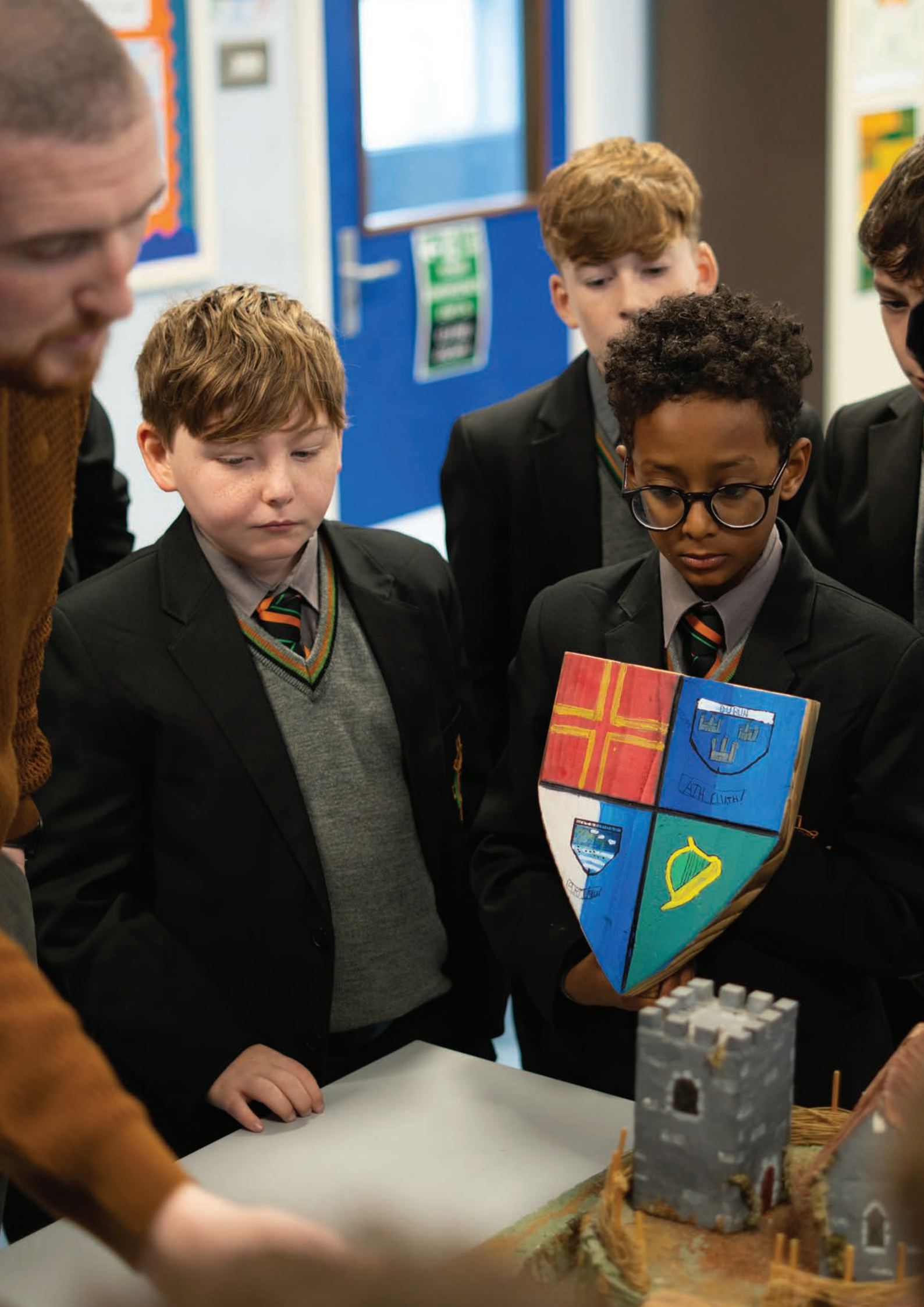
St. Mary's offers a broad extra-curricular programme that caters to the interests and passions of all pupils. Pupils who enjoy the privilege of representing St. Mary's in extra-curricular pursuits do so with pride and distinction. We take immense pride in our tradition and history of sporting success and excellence. Our recent landmark appointment of a GAA Games Development Officer highlights our goal for St. Mary's to become a Centre of Excellence for the GAA in West Belfast.

Academically, our pupils consistently achieve outstanding grades at GCSE and A Level. The majority of our pupils progress to university, studying an array of academic disciplines. Our alumni roll of honour is incredibly successful, dynamic and influential. You can read about the achievements of past generations of Simmarians in our online digital Simmarian Archive, accessible via our website at [www.stmaryscbgs.com](http://www.stmaryscbgs.com). We are confident that our pupils will leave St. Mary's as young men who have achieved excellence, can be leaders in their chosen careers and will make valuable contributions to their local communities and the wider world.

As Principal, I hope you enjoy reading our prospectus. We know you have high aspirations for your son and we regard it as a privilege to be part of this journey. We look forward to working with you, and together we will enable your son to fully realise his potential as a St. Mary's pupil.



**Brendan McComb**  
Principal



# History

St Mary's belongs to the international group of schools served by the Congregation of Irish Christian Brothers.

St Mary's is an Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) School. It is inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice to create school communities dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning, and which cultivate Gospel-based values.

The School was founded in 1866 to provide education for day pupils in the Belfast area. Most Rev. Dr. Dorrian, Bishop of Down and Connor, invited the Irish Christian Brothers to Belfast in 1866. Four Brothers arrived in Belfast on 3rd November and took up residence at 26 Regent Street. On 12th November 1866, St. Mary's opened its doors and over three hundred students enrolled on the first day.

In 1868, the Bishop asked the Brothers to open a second school, St. Patrick's, Donegall Street. Further expansion took place with the opening of the Oxford Street School in 1874. From the beginning, all three schools provided primary and secondary education.

However in 1924, it was decided to build a completely separate secondary school, and a site was purchased in Barrack Street. St. Mary's was opened in 1929. With the population explosion of the 1960s, this site proved totally inadequate and it was decided to build a new Grammar School on the Glen Road, where we have remained since 1968.

We now cater for over 1,200 pupils. To facilitate junior students, from north, south and east Belfast, junior classes were still held in St. Mary's Barrack Street until 1998. From September 1999, all lessons moved to our site on Glen Road.

As a Christian Brothers' School, Catholic religious and moral education is central to the School's Educational and Religious Philosophy.

# School Ethos and Core Values

The ethos of St Mary's CBGS is captured best in our Vision Statement:

In the tradition of Edmund Rice, we promote our faith, champion our social justice, nurture a culture of inclusivity, that prioritise the values and virtues of trust, respect and equality, celebrate success, elevate expectations, engage with local community and foster a climate that improves the health and wellbeing of all Simmarians.

Our core values, decided by our pupils and staff, are:





# School Ethos and Core Values

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At St. Mary's everything we do as a school community seeks to continue the work and vision of Blessed Edmund and his religious congregation. For almost 100 years, our school has formed thousands of outstanding young men from a diverse range of backgrounds, including many great and influential leaders, in a wide variety of disciplines.

This tradition continues each year, as we welcome a new group of Simmarians in Year 8. We recognise the uniqueness of every student and seek to build upon their God-given talents and abilities.

Our ethos and core values are strengthened by our links with our Parent Teachers and Friends of St Mary's Association and with our renowned Alumni network. These links enrich and develop our history, as a community that spans generations and passes on core values. We believe that our friends and alumni play a tremendously significant role in helping to provide opportunities for our students, that will benefit their development into outstanding young people.

## ERST Charter

We fully subscribe to the holistic vision expressed in the five key elements of the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

## Nurturing Faith, Christian Spirituality & Gospel-Based Values

*At St Mary's, we*

- Provide and develop a Catholic education that cultivates a living faith.
- Educate our young people in Gospel-based values.

## Promoting Partnership

*At St Mary's, we*

- Promote inclusiveness, mutual respect & the development of the school as a community where personal growth is facilitated.

- Strive to develop meaningful and engaging relationships within the school, in our local community & in our global outreach endeavours.

## Excelling In Teaching And Learning

*At St Mary's, we*

- Have high expectations of our pupils.
- Create an orderly, safe and positive learning environment which enables the holistic development of every pupil.
- Review, evaluate and assess our progress.
- Engage with best educational practice as a means of school improvement.
- Challenge our pupils and support them in achieving their true potential.

## Creating a Caring School Community

*At St Mary's, we*

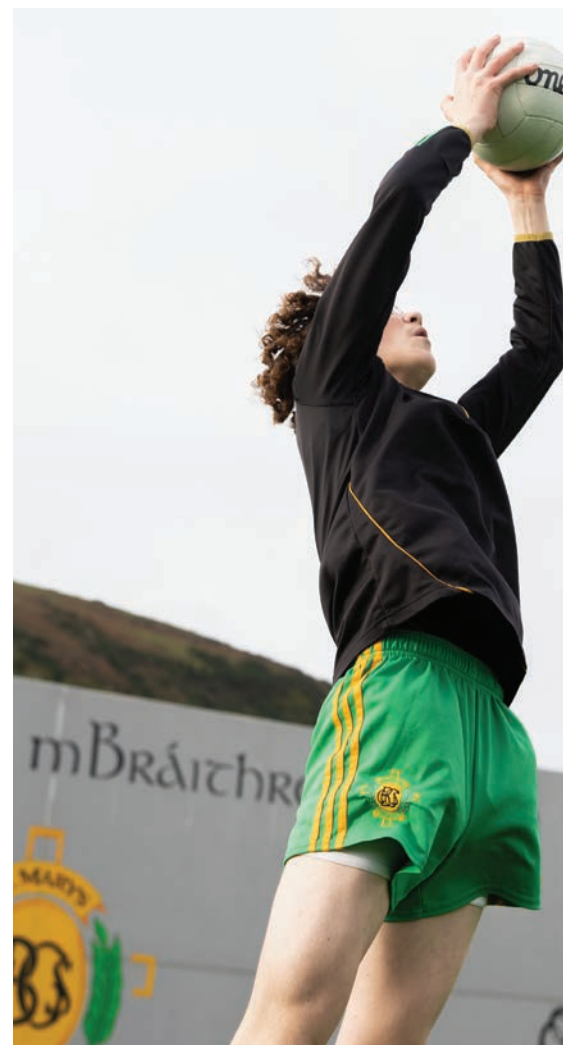
- Recognise the uniqueness of every member.
- Build relationships and foster the sense of care, compassion and community that characterised Jesus' life.
- Encourage school involvement and the development of the person.
- Strive to live by Christian values and encourage others to stand in solidarity with those who are powerless, vulnerable and marginalised.

## Inspiring Transformational Leadership

*At St Mary's, we*

- Believe that partnership between school and home is essential.
- Encourage leadership and responsibility amongst our pupils
- Encourage pupils to play an active part in the prefect system and student council.

Our hope is that the pupils we engage with today will play a leading role in, and make a worthwhile contribution to, the society of tomorrow. Our hope is that they will use their skills and talents to work for justice in the wider world.



# Staff and Pastoral Care

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St Mary's promotes an environment in which students, staff, parents and carers are committed to the idea of achieving excellence within a caring, supportive community.

Each member of staff is responsible for, and committed to, the welfare of the students. They are responsible for the pastoral and academic growth of our students.

St Mary's has very clear and effective staffing structures. We have a Vice Principal who has overall responsibility for leading the pastoral care structures and programmes within the school.

Heads of School for KS3 (Year 8 to 10), KS4 (Year 11 and 12) and KS5 (Year 13 and 14) liaise with Heads of Year and Form Tutors to ensure the pastoral welfare of our pupils.

Heads of Departments are responsible for the teaching and learning in their departments, but they of course have a huge role to play in providing high quality pastoral care to all students.

We have a strong team of Classroom Assistants, Study Supervisors and Learning Support Tutors. Our administrative and ancillary staff are indispensable and complete our school community.

Pastoral Care is at the heart of our school. We provide a caring, supportive environment in which pupils are nurtured and allowed to develop their unique talents. We celebrate the diversity of our pupils and their place in our school community.

When any new student joins our school community, they are cared for by a dedicated team of Form Tutors and a Head of Year, who will support them during the transition period and liaise with parents to ensure that all the boys feel settled and happy at St. Mary's.

The Form Teacher is an important person in your son's academic and pastoral journey through St Mary's and is a key point of contact for parents. As they meet with the form class each morning, they are able to monitor the well-being of each pupil in the class, monitor behaviour and attendance issues, address any academic concerns, and deliver important messages set out in our Personal Development programme.

Form Teachers remain with the same Form Class throughout Key Stage 3 (Years 8-10), allowing strong relationships to be established. To enhance continuity further, your son's Year Head remains with the Year Group from Years 8-12 and is the key figure in tracking your son's progress. We encourage parents to engage in positive partnership with our pastoral team to ensure that your son is supported during his time at St Mary's.

## Restorative Practice In St Mary's

At St Mary's, we are committed to using restorative practices to complement our Positive Behaviour Policy. A restorative approach places an emphasis upon the ownership of both the problem and the solution, lying with the key parties involved in the situation. Furthermore, it puts relationships at the heart of the process when resolving conflict or addressing behaviour.

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# Additional Educational Needs

The AEN Provision in St Mary's is designed to ensure the needs of all students with specific individual learning needs such as ASD, Dyslexia, ADHD and Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties, are supported within an inclusive and socially integrated learning environment.

With our brand new, dedicated Learning Support Hub, we are able to provide an environment that will allow enhanced support for all students. Within the Learning Support Hub, there are small group teaching rooms, an IT suite, office for AEN staff, alongside an innovative Sensory room.

There is a Learning Support Co-ordinator, who is assisted by Specialist Teachers and Classroom Assistants. The team ensures that each pupil has full access to the curriculum and enjoys a varied, engaging and socially inclusive experience.

There is a strong focus on Continuing Professional Development, with staff availing of a wide range of accredited courses, such as Understanding ASD, Applied Behaviour Analysis, Mental Health and Anxiety Management, Anxiety-Based School Refusal and Peripatetic Hearing.



# School Building, Facilities and Future Developments

St Mary's has a wide range of facilities to provide a welcoming environment for the school community. In addition to the existing facilities and amenities outlined below, St Mary's CBGS is bringing forward proposals for a purpose-built Sports Centre that would provide modern facilities for physical education, sport and wellbeing activities.

The proposal involves the construction of a standalone Sports Centre that will provide modern, fit-for-purpose facilities for physical education, sport and wellbeing activities. This project responds to longstanding challenges with the school's existing provision.

The proposed facility will include the following spaces and features:

- A large multi-purpose Sports Hall that combines gymnasium functions and is capable of accommodating a full-size basketball court or five badminton courts.
- A dedicated Fitness Suite with equipment to support strength, conditioning and cardiovascular training.
- A Dance, Drama and Lecture space suitable for a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- A Physical Education classroom, in line with Department of Education standards.
- Modern changing rooms and washroom facilities for both pupils and staff.
- An office for PE staff, as well as associated support areas.
- An external pedestrian bridge to provide accessible connection to the upper-level grass sports pitches.

This transformative resource would serve to complement the facilities that are already available to our students:

Dedicated and fully equipped Science, Art, Technology and Home Economics rooms

A 200-seat lecture theatre

PE facilities include a gym, fitness suite, spin studio and swimming pool

Handball court

State of the art Ball Wall

3 grass pitches, including a full-size Championship GAA pitch

Separate study facilities with full-time supervisors are provided for Years 13 and 14

Specialist IT facilities

A drama theatre

Music facilities include tuition rooms, 2 practice rooms and a sound recording studio

Assembly Hall and Oratory for assemblies, prizegiving and school production

Flood-lit 3G pitch

Basketball court.





# Transitions

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## Transition from Primary School

The move into post-primary education marks an exciting and important milestone in your child's life. While it can feel like a big step for both pupils and parents, it is also a time full of new opportunities. Your son will encounter new subjects, a different school routine, and a new community of teachers and peers.

At St Mary's, we are committed to making this transition as smooth and positive as possible through a comprehensive Induction Programme designed to support every pupil as he begins his journey as a Simmarian.

The Year 8 Induction begins in late August, before classes officially start. During these initial days, pupils meet their Form Teacher, get to know their form class, are introduced to senior students and staff, and begin learning about life at St Mary's.

A highlight of the first week is the Edmund Rice Camp, which encourages teamwork and friendship through fun, active challenges.

Parents are warmly invited to an Induction Meeting at the start of term — an opportunity to meet the pastoral team who will be supporting their sons throughout the year.

On the first full teaching day at St Mary's, Year 8 students will have the 'freedom of the school', as first day for all other year groups is intentionally delayed to provide an additional layer to the settling-in period.

To help pupils settle in, subject teachers accompany Year 8 classes between lessons during the first week, while senior prefects are assigned to each form group to provide guidance and reassurance.

Each class also takes part in a retreat during the first term, a reflective and community-building experience, and the Year 8 Mass formally welcomes our new pupils into the St Mary's family, celebrating the vision and values of Edmund Rice.

Throughout the year, pupils engage in Personal Development programmes during their weekly form period, helping them develop confidence, resiliences and responsibility. They participate in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences. There is a wide variety of Enrichment opportunities including Anti-Bullying, teamwork, road safety and healthy lifestyle.

To conclude their first year, ERST Awards are presented to those pupils who have best embodied the spirit and values of our school and Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter.

## KS3 to KS4 Transition

Transition from KS3 to KS4 is another milestone in your son's life. As in Year 8, your son will move into a new form class and will be following a new, tailored curriculum. In order to support this transition, Year 11 students will have their own dedicated induction period, including a retreat with their new form class.

To continue and enhance the partnerships that have been developed between school and home, an Induction meeting is held for all parents of Year 11 pupils. This provides them with the opportunity to meet the new pastoral team who will be looking after their sons and gain further insight to what lies ahead during Year 11 and 12.

Throughout Year 11, students will have the opportunity to meet the school's Careers Adviser too, initiating an important process. Study skills sessions will be offered during Year 11 to support your son as they plan for GCSE exams.

Careers and Personal Development Programmes are explored in the weekly Form Period, in assemblies and in presentations by external speakers and agencies.



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# Senior School

Our senior pupils are an integral part of our school community. The transition to KS5 can be a challenge, but students are supported by our outstanding and vastly experienced Pastoral Team and subject teachers. With over 300 students in years 13 and 14, we are proud to combine strong traditions with forward-thinking support rooted in our ethos. We aim to develop well-rounded individuals, ready to lead with purpose in the world beyond school. We have a vibrant Student Leadership team allowing our students to develop effective team working and leadership skills. For students entering the senior school, we host an Induction Morning to help foster strong partnerships with parents, while students complete our Year 13 Induction Programme, comprising a variety of sessions conducted by both our own staff and external agencies.

At St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School, our Senior School offers an outstanding academic and pastoral environment tailored to equip students for university, higher-level apprenticeships and direct employment.

Year 13 students can also avail of a variety of enrichment opportunities running throughout the year.

- First Aid (Level 2)
- Financial Awareness
- Survival Cookery
- Conversational Spanish
- Conversational Irish
- DIY
- Sport and Fitness
- CEPHAS
- Conversational French
- Handball Foundation Course
- Driving Test Theory
- Primary School Outreach
- ICT
- ART Appreciation



At KS5, there is a strong focus on the Preventative Curriculum and the following areas are covered by specialist speakers:

- Alcohol & Drugs Education
- Charities – SVP/Trocaire/
- Mood Matters Aware NI
- Road/Driver Safety
- Gambling Awareness (GAMCARE)
- HYPE

Careers and preparation for university life are also encompassed within the KS5 Programme.

- UCAS
- Personal Statements – QUB, UU
- Higher level Institutions (QUB, UU, LJMU)
- Higher Level Apprenticeships
- A number of pupils also participate in the HE plus Programme run by the University of Cambridge, where students undertake academic research and lectures from Cambridge professors, with students availing of a fully funded trip to Cambridge.





# Extra-Curricular

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We encourage all our pupils to become active members of our school community and involve themselves in the rich extra-curricular life of the school.

The Ambassador Awards were launched in 2023 as a way to recognise the outstanding achievements of our students outside the classroom. These awards have been presented for sporting successes in Gaelic football, hurling, soccer, basketball, water polo, judo, boxing and golf, as well as for non-sporting successes such as contribution to the musical life of the school or volunteering for a charity.

The criteria for an award includes, but is not limited to:

- Any international sporting representation
- Membership of a county development squad that wins a provincial/All-Ireland title or captaincy of such a squad
- Recipient of an All-Star Award
- Captaincy of a school team that wins a provincial/All-Ireland title
- Other sports: winning significant provincial or national title, e.g. boxing, running, water polo, martial arts
- Completion of an accredited qualification outside of School

Other criteria may be applied for recognition of outstanding achievements in the arts, humanities or a valuable contribution to society.

## **EDMUND RICE INTERNATIONAL (ERI) YOUTH AMBASSADORS**

The ERI Youth Ambassador project aims to link Edmund Rice schools in their efforts to build a more just, sustainable and compassionate world, where all experience full enjoyment of their human rights. In previous years, our Youth Ambassadors have had the opportunity to visit Geneva to see how Social Justice and Human Rights Advocacy takes place at International governmental level, centring on a visit to the United Nations.

## **WHOLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL**

Pupil voice is very important to St Mary's and pupils are encouraged to have their say in school matters important to them. The Whole School Student Council has representatives from each Year Group. Each class has a council representative and every opinion is heard. In the Whole School

Council, every student can have a say in the school matters that are important to him. Members of the council wear a green tie to denote their membership of the council.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **ADVOCACY GROUP**

This group is made up of a growing number of our pupils who are interested in making a difference in their local community. They truly embody the values of the ERST Charter and are living examples of the values we wish to instill in St Mary's pupils.

At St. Mary's we have a strong sense of social justice and we are acutely aware of the poverty in our community. We have a long-standing tradition of supporting families in our locality through the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and our annual Catholic Caring appeal. Christmas is a time for joy and celebration. Unfortunately, for many families it is a time of sadness, fear and uncertainty. Our Christmas hamper and toy appeals help to ease this uncertainty for many families, as well as instilling a sense of humility in our students who contribute so generously to both appeals.

In addition to our Saint Vincent de Paul and Catholic Caring appeals, the Social Justice Advocacy Group has been a very successful initiative since its introduction in 2016. The group is largely based around supporting local hostels for the homeless, organising food collections for the local food banks, and raising awareness about the reality of homelessness in Belfast. Over the years, the students have had several opportunities to engage in discussions with MLAs to encourage further work to be done to alleviate our homelessness crisis. The projects supported by our students are rooted in gospel values and the social teaching of the Church.

## **ECO CLUB**

The award-winning Eco club was established in 2016 by a group of pupils keen to promote environmental issues in school. There are ongoing projects with Belfast City Council, Belfast Hills Partnership and NI Water. These look at issues such as litter, biodiversity and water as a resource. The Eco Club is developing a growing area in the school and working with the RSPB to improve habitats for endangered species of birds. The club meets weekly at lunchtime and is open to all year groups.





Mhuire na mBráith



# Extra-Curricular

## SHARED EDUCATION



Shared Education is the education together of students from different religious and/or socio-economic backgrounds. It focuses on educational & reconciliation outcomes, enabling students to appreciate and celebrate diversity whilst enhancing their own knowledge & experiences. Shared Education promotes a culture of mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful, regular engagement & interaction in learning between pupils from different backgrounds, & between schools & their communities.

Since 2024/25, we have been partners in Shared Education with Methodist College Belfast, Coláiste Feirste and Malone Integrated College. Our initial events included trips to our partner schools and visits to tour Stormont and see the Executive in action. In 2025/26, students have had the opportunity to take part in the First Tech Challenge, which is a STEM enrichment programme, helping to develop technical knowledge and life skills whilst broadening their understanding of STEM education and career pathways.

### Music

Our Music Department operates a diverse programme of extra-curricular activities for all boys to engage in & develop key ensemble, listening & performing skills, including Junior Choir and Senior Choir, Orchestra & Irish Traditional Group. Instrumental and vocal tuition on a wide range of instruments is delivered through our very own Peripatetic Music Service, which caters for all orchestral instruments, voice, piano, organ, electric guitar, drum kit & Irish traditional instruments. Performance is central to musical training at St Mary's & we offer many opportunities to practise performance in formal and informal settings.

### Educational Visits & International Trips

At St Mary's, we are focused on providing students with meaningful learning experiences beyond the school environment. Staff seek out enrichment opportunities throughout the year in local, national and international settings. One of our most sought-after trips is our Ski Trip, which returned in March 2024 for the first time since 2019, where staff & students embark on a week-long trip to some of the best ski resorts in Europe.

Another notable trip in October 2025 included our first visit to Iceland, where 30 keen Geographers were able to experience Iceland's oldest natural pool, see Strokkur erupt & visit Þingvellir National Park to see where two tectonic plates meet.

Other extra-curricular opportunities include our ever popular Chess clubs, Mini Enterprise, Coding Club & Junior Art club.

Lots of further extra-curricular activities & competitions run throughout the school year. These are promoted during Assemblies & details are made available on Year Heads' notice boards.

### Extra Curricular Sport

Represent the Dubh, Glas agus Bui! St Mary's CBGS have an unrivalled reputation for excellence across Colleges sport, particularly in Hurling & Gaelic Football. Our extra-curricular sporting programme is wide, extensive & inclusive. Basketball, Gaelic Football, Soccer, Hurling & Water Polo are all sports played at a competitive level. We also compete in schools Golf competitions. While we continue to have much success across a wide range of sports at local & national, we encourage & value participation & commitment.

### Gaelic Football

Our Gaelic football teams participate in the Antrim Schools' Cup, Ulster Colleges competitions, or both, depending on the year group. Recently, we have moved back into A grade level with some of our year groups, competing with the best schools in Ulster. Training for our Year 8s is at least twice a week after school & begins in September, in preparation for the Antrim Schools' Cup throughout Term 1. As you move through the school, training will be either before or after school.

### Hurling

As the most successful hurling school in Ulster, winning the most Mageean Cup titles (28), we have continued to have huge success in recent years with our hurlers securing many Ulster Schools titles, including the McNamee Cup (Year 9), Leonard Cup (Year 10) & Gallagher Cup (Year 11). Additionally, we have secured many Antrim Cup All-Stars across multiple year groups. The school has a strong hurling tradition & is building for future senior success.

### Soccer

High levels of participation regularly result in our teams being very competitive in both Belfast Schools competitions & Northern Ireland Schools competitions. Teams normally train once a week on our 4G pitch.



# The Curriculum

At St Mary's we strive to provide each pupil with the opportunity to develop his potential. The school offers a balanced curriculum at each Key Stage which meets the individual needs of our pupils and which is in keeping with our school ethos. Our aim is to empower pupils to achieve the very best of which they are capable, by supporting their development as individuals and as contributors to society, the economy and the environment. Through a rich and varied curriculum, we enable every

pupil to realise their full potential, with high-quality teaching, effective assessment, and the monitoring and tracking of progress central to our provision. Pupils are encouraged to participate fully in both curricular and extra-curricular enrichment activities that enhance their overall school experience. Our learning environment remains dynamic and responsive, continually evolving to reflect new developments and ensure an engaging and forward-looking educational experience.

## KEY STAGE 3 (YEARS 8-10)

Pupils follow a broad curriculum. Data from standardised assessments conducted each year, help us to ensure your son's individual needs are being met.

- Year 10 pupils sit a GCSE Maths module at the end of Year 10.

- An Enrichment Programme for Literacy and Numeracy is delivered to some pupils at KS3 to support their learning.
- Pupils from Irish-Medium Primary Schools, who opt to study Irish, sit GCSE Irish in Year 10. This allows them to progress to the study of an additional GCSE in Gaelige at KS4.

Drama	English	Geography	I.T
Mathematics	Music	PE	History
Religious Education	Science	Technology	Art
Learning for Life & Work (Citizenship / Employability / Home Economics / Personal Development) Skills Builder			
Languages (KS3)	French / Gaelige / Irish / Spanish		

## KEY STAGE 4 (YEARS 11 and 12)

Key Stage 4 is a significant period in your son's education. We ensure that the subjects offered to your son are tailored for his needs.

Data from standardised assessments at Key Stage 3, alongside tracking data from the 4 key assessment points in Years 9 and 10, will inform how we adapt the curriculum to help your son achieve success at Key Stage 4.

We aim to provide your son with a curriculum which will provide appropriate and viable pathways for transition into Key Stage 5 at St Mary's, and then into further education or employment.

### CORE SUBJECTS

We stream pupils at KS4 to ensure that we are meeting each pupil's academic needs and provide him with opportunities to achieve success. The following subjects are compulsory:

GCSE English Language	GCSE Mathematics	GCSE Single/Double Award Science
GCSE Learning for Life and Work (LLW) or Level 2 Certificate in Preparation for Adult Life		
GCSE Religious Studies or Level 2 Certificate in Religious Education		
Non-exam PE lessons	Timetabled Careers periods	

Further options include:

Art and Design	English Literature	Irish	French
BTEC Sport (Level 2)	Media Studies	Gaelige	Spanish
Occupational Studies	Further Mathematics	Music	Drama
OCN Certificate in IT Applications (Level 2)-	Business and Communication Systems	Moving Image Arts	Technology
Business Studies	Government and Politics	Geography	History
Digital Technology (Multimedia / Programming)	OCN Skills for Business (Level 2)	Sports Studies	Home Economics



# The Curriculum

## Key Stage 5

Senior pupils are provided with a wide variety of subject choices at Key Stage 5. All courses are delivered on site. All pupils must study a minimum of three AS/A2 subjects, or the equivalent. A timetabled Careers

Programme ensures that our pupils are well-prepared for the opportunities that they can pursue post-KS5.

The following subjects are offered:

BTec Construction	English Literature	Media Studies	Art and Design
Applied Business (Level 3)	Moving Image Arts	Biology	French
Music	Business Studies	Geography	Physics
Chemistry	Government and Politics	Professional Business Services	Computer Studies
History	Religion	Design and Technology	Irish
Spanish	Drama	BTEC IT (Single Award Double Award)	BTEC Sport (Level 3)
Digital Technology	Mathematics	Health and Life Science	Further Mathematics

Additionally, there is a full and varied Enrichment Programme which is outlined in the Sixth Form Section.

## PERSONALISED LEARNING PROGRAMME

The aim of the Personalised Learning Programme is to enhance our understanding of the academic potential of our pupils.

- We can help pupils to improve their performance through systematic intervention.
- We aim to identify, as early as possible, pupils who are at risk of underperforming and provide appropriate support for each pupil.

- All pupils sit standardised tests each year. This information is used to tailor appropriate support for our pupils.
- There are 4 assessment points (ARP1, ARP2, ARP3, ARP4) each year with formal tests being taken at Christmas and in the summer term.
- Subject Teachers, Form Teachers, Year Heads and Heads of Department are all involved in the tracking of our pupils' achievements.
- At KS4, the curriculum is tailored to meet the individual needs of each pupil.





# Careers

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At St Mary's we place a strong emphasis on the provision of effective careers education, information, advice and guidance. Our careers programmes for each key stage are pupil-centred and progressive, with the overall objective of supporting our pupils to develop self-awareness, career awareness and career management skills, so that they are equipped to make informed decisions about their future pathways. Our full-time registered Careers Adviser provides support for St Mary's students at all key stages and particularly at key transition points.

All pupils have free access to professional, impartial and confidential careers advice and guidance. We aim to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that they are provided with the information they need to support their sons in various decision-making processes.

Careers education begins in Year 8 with the Employability strand of Learning for Life and Work (LLW), supported with a complementary programme of careers lessons delivered to each year group during form period. These lessons and activities provide the opportunity for pupils to work on employability skills and begin to develop their career ideas and plans. This pattern continues throughout Key Stage 3 and 4, with an emphasis in Years 10 and 12 on supporting pupils through the GCSE and A level options processes. At Key Stage 5, timetabled Careers classes assist with preparation for various post-18 pathways, including university, further education and higher level apprenticeships.

Our careers programmes also provide the opportunity for St Mary's pupils to:

- Attend internal and external careers talks and events, specific to their age and needs, and delivered by a variety of higher education, further education, training and apprenticeship providers, together with a range of key employers.
- Research post-16 and post-18 pathways and receive guidance and support in the completion of related application processes.

- Develop interview skills and have the opportunity to participate in mock interviews with the school's Careers Adviser, employers and St Mary's alumni.
- Receive a one-to-one interview in Year 12 with dedicated careers advisers from the DfE Careers Service.
- Engage in a work experience programme in Year 13, which is directly related to their career path.
- Attend Open Days in local and national universities and colleges.

## Leaver Destinations

We place great importance on ensuring that students explore all available options before making decisions about their future. This commitment is reflected in the diverse range of destinations our leavers pursue.

The majority of our Year 14 students progress directly to university, enrolling in a wide spectrum of courses. We maintain strong partnerships with our outstanding local institutions, Queen's University and Ulster University, which continue to be the most popular choices among our pupils.

Over the past five years, our students have also secured places at a variety of other universities, including highly competitive Russell Group institutions such as the University of Cambridge, Durham University, the University of Glasgow, the University of Liverpool, the University of Manchester, Newcastle University and the University of St Andrews.

In addition to university pathways, many students successfully obtain places on higher level apprenticeships. Recent leavers have joined programmes with leading employers such as Almac Group, Citibank, Deloitte, Liberty IT, NI Audit Office, PwC, WPS Engineering and Version 1.

Our ultimate goal is to empower students to make informed choices and submit strong applications, enabling them to take the next step that best aligns with their aspirations and strengths.





# Uniform

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Our uniform gives our students a sense of identity, loyalty and pride in themselves and in their school. It is an integral part of becoming a Simmarian and is distinguishable amongst other school uniforms.

We are aware of current guidelines set out in the School Uniform Bill and that our policy must adhere to these guidelines. Outlined below are the requirements for each year group. For the 2026/27 Academic year, we plan to introduce an outdoor, waterproof coat for Years 8-12 and for Sixth Form.

Further information on where our branded items can be purchased would follow once a student has been admitted to our school.

## Years 8-12

Grey shirt with school tie  
Dark plain grey/black trousers  
School blazer with crest  
School pullover (if required)  
Black shoes only—no trainers (no black trainers, no black canvas shoes, no black shoes with white markings).

## Years 13-14

Formal plain white shirt with collar  
Formal plain black/grey trousers  
Black crested senior tie  
Black school-crested jumper  
School blazer with crest  
Black shoes only—no trainers (no black trainers, no black canvas shoes, no black shoes with white markings).



## Edmund Rice Prayer

O God, we thank you for the life of Blessed Edmund Rice.

He opened his heart to Christ present in  
those oppressed by poverty and injustice.

May we follow his example of faith and generosity.

Grant us the courage and compassion of Blessed Edmund  
as we seek to live lives of love and service.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

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More information is available from the  
school website and social media platforms:  
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[facebook.com/stmaryscbgsbelfast](https://facebook.com/stmaryscbgsbelfast)  
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