



*St. Gerald's De La Salle College Christmas Newsletter 2025*



## Principal's Christmas Message:



As we approach the Christmas break, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the remarkable activity, achievement, and community spirit that have defined life in St. Gerald's DLS College this term. Our students have worked diligently throughout the term, demonstrating maturity, focus, and resilience, particularly in their recent examinations. Their commitment to both their studies and the broader life of the College is evident each day, and it is a source of great pride for all of us.

St. Gerald's continues to be a vibrant and dynamic place of learning, where academic endeavour is complemented by a rich tapestry of extracurricular pursuits. Gaelic football, basketball, choir, chess, and the many other clubs and activities available in the College have once again showcased the talent, dedication, and enthusiasm of our students. I commend each young man for the energy he brings to school life; your contributions enrich our community and embody the values we strive to uphold.

I also wish to extend my sincere thanks to our staff. Their professionalism is evident in every lesson taught, every initiative led, and every challenge navigated. Yet, above all, it is the genuine care they show for our students that most distinguishes them. Their willingness to go beyond the expected to support, encourage, and guide makes an immeasurable difference in the lives of the young people entrusted to us.

To our parents and guardians, thank you for your continued support and partnership. I firmly believe that it takes a village to raise a child, and by working together we ensure that we are doing the very best for the young men in our care. Your engagement—whether through communication, attendance at events, or quiet encouragement at home—strengthens our shared mission and contributes profoundly to each student's success.

As our exam classes prepare for the challenges ahead, I want to wish them the very best with their revision over the break. Your hard work now will stand to you in the months to come, and we have every confidence in your ability to rise to the occasion.

Finally, I would like to wish all students, staff, parents, and guardians a safe, peaceful, and happy Christmas. May the holiday offer rest, renewal, and time spent with those who matter most. I look forward to welcoming everyone back in the new year as we continue our work together in the spirit of De La Salle.

Warm regards,

Mr Burke

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## *A Message From the Newly Appointed Deputy Principal:*



I am deeply honoured and genuinely excited to take up the role of Deputy Principal of St Gerald's DLS College. After 17 years teaching English and Religion in SGC, this appointment is a responsibility I embrace with real enthusiasm. Senior students have recently asked if I miss the banter of the classroom, and in all honesty, the answer will always be yes; however, I recognise and deeply appreciate the privileged position I now occupy.

I have been truly blessed over the years to share so many positive and formative experiences with colleagues and students— through school tours, Peer 4 Peer, Student Council and countless day-to-day moments that capture the spirit of our school. These experiences have reinforced for me just how special the community of St Gerald's is. I am really looking forward to the opportunity to work even more closely with my colleagues in this new role, and to further develop our partnership with parents and, most importantly, our students.

My belief in the Lasallian ethos and the enduring worth of Catholic education is grounded in my own background as a Mercy girl and former student of St Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar. The heart of Catholic education is about far more than academic achievement. It is about forming young people who are good people — students who know how to treat others with respect and kindness, who take responsibility for their actions, and who strive each day to be the best version of themselves. Supporting students in their personal and intellectual growth is a mission I care deeply about, and one I am proud to continue in this new role.

I am particularly excited by the opportunity to continue in the footsteps of the De La Salle Brothers and in more recent times, Mr Hannon, Mr Burke, Mr Hyland, Mr Askin and our current Principal, Mr Burke. Both Mr Askin and Mr Burke have been phenomenal sources of guidance and support to me so far, and I am grateful for their wisdom, good humour and encouragement. I am very much looking forward to the journey ahead and to serving the St Gerald's DLS College community with integrity, compassion and energy.

*Regia Duffy*



**Faith in the Presence of God:**

*Living with faith, reflection and spiritual awareness!*

*Opening School Mass:*

On 13th October 2025, we gathered as a school community to celebrate our Opening School Mass. Students and staff took part through readings, music and prayers of the faithful, marking a prayerful and meaningful beginning to the academic year in the Lasallian tradition.

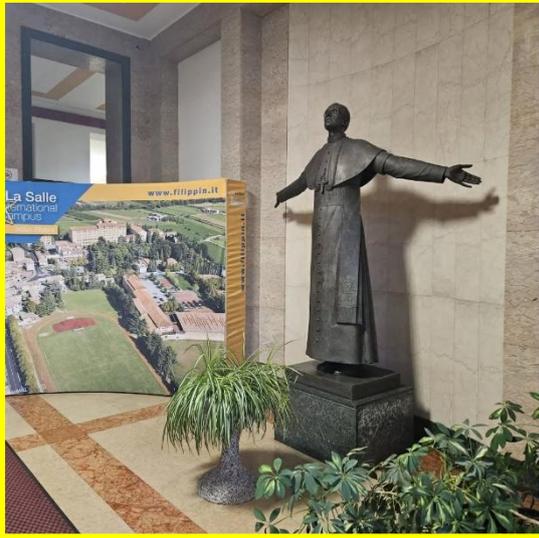


## Erasmus Italian Cultural Exchange

In late October 2025, a group of 5th Year students travelled to Istituti Filippin in Paderno del Grappa, Italy, as part of our Erasmus programme. During the trip they experienced an Italian school day, explored the town of Asolo, visited the World War I memorial on Monte Grappa and shared meals with their Italian host families from the international Lasallian campus. Despite wet weather, spirits were high during a festive visit to Gardaland. It was a powerful experience of faith, culture and international friendship.







***Until next time!***

## **CONCERN FOR THE POOR & SOCIAL JUSTICE**

*Service, solidarity and community responsibility!*

### **TY Collection for Mulranny Day Centre Housing:**

On 9th October 2025, Transition Year students volunteered in town to raise funds for Mulranny Day Centre Housing. Their enthusiasm, generosity and teamwork made a meaningful contribution to a vital local service.





## Simon Community Sleep Out:

21st November 2025, a group of TY students took part in a Sleep Out to support the Galway Simon Community, raising over €2,000. Spending a night outdoors gave students a deeper appreciation of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness and reflected Lasallian service in action.

**GIVE WEST**  
**SLEEP OUT**

**St. Gerald's DLS College**  
Created by **Galway Simon Community**



*Well done!*

## ***Movember Croagh Patrick Climb:***

**On a cold November morning, LCA students, supported by Ms Flynn and Mr McGee, took on the challenge of climbing Croagh Patrick to raise awareness and funds for men's mental health through Movember. Despite harsh conditions and snow at the summit, the group showed resilience and determination, raising over €1,000 for this important cause. Well done on this incredible achievement.**



## Movember Fundraising Celebration:

After surpassing their fundraising target in late November 2025, LCA Co-ordinator Mr McGee honoured his promise and shaved his beard in support of the campaign, with past pupil and celebrity barber Conrad Kelly stepping in to complete the transformation. The initiative combined humour, generosity and school spirit in support of a very serious cause.



## Age Strong, Live Long Community Event:

On 8th October 2025, our students supported the 'Age Strong, Live Long' community health event in Breaffy GAA Clubhouse, which welcomed over 200 attendees. The event provided health screenings, information stalls and vaccinations. Our students' warmth and helpfulness played a key role in the success of the day.

We hope you enjoyed the day and took away something valuable from it.

Thank you to all our wonderful panellists, sponsors, TY students and stalls who made the day possible.



## Road Safety – Life Saver Project:

On 21st November 2025, Garda Micheál Gorman delivered a powerful road safety presentation to our 6th Year and LCA students. The Life Saver Project highlighted the real-life consequences of dangerous driving and encouraged students to make responsible, life-saving choices.



## QUALITY EDUCATION

*Academic achievement, creativity, enterprise and lifelong learning!*

**Celebrating the Leaving Cert Class of 2025!**

On 22nd August 2025, we proudly celebrated our Leaving Certificate Class of 2025. Despite national grade deflation, an impressive 35% of students achieved over 500 points. This success reflects the commitment of students, staff, parents and the wider school community.



## University of Galway Excellence Scholarships

On 21st November 2025, past pupils Orann Bourke and Cormac Cronin were awarded University of Galway Excellence Scholarships. The entire school community is proud of their achievements and wishes them continued success in the future. Well done.



**St. Gerald's Chess Cup 2025  
Mohamed Abdlatif  
Best Newcomer**



**Mohamed being presented with his trophy  
by Principal Shaun Burke &  
Mr Joe Daly Chess Coordinator.**

**St. Gerald's Chess Cup 2025  
Seán Cafferty  
Most Improved Player**



**Seán being presented with his trophy by  
Principal Shaun Burke &  
Mr Joe Daly Chess Coordinator.**

**Chess @ SGC**

**St. Gerald's Chess Cup 2025  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place Chris Sibi**



**Chris being presented with his trophy by  
Principal Shaun Burke &  
Mr Joe Daly Chess Coordinator.**

**St. Gerald's Chess Cup 2025  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place Dmytro Krys**



**Runner Up Dmytro Krys being presented  
with his trophy by Principal Shaun Burke  
& Mr Joe Daly Chess Coordinator.**

# Chess at SGC: A Year of Skill, Strategy, and Success

Chess continues to go from strength to strength at SGC, with students across all year groups showcasing outstanding talent, commitment, and sportsmanship throughout the year.

The 1st Year School Chess Tournament was a hugely competitive event, with 120 first-year students battling it out over 11 intense rounds. After an impressive performance, Chris Sibi (1C) emerged as champion, finishing with 10 wins and 1 draw. Neitas Valiulis secured second place, while Joseph Jyothesh finished third. Congratulations to all involved for making the tournament such a success and for competing with such enthusiasm and respect – truly fitting for the Marshall Cup 2025 season.

The prestigious Marshall Cup 2025 itself delivered seven rounds of high-quality chess. Congratulations to Sacha Perez Arancibia, who claimed the title after a series of excellent performances. Dmytro Krys finished in second place, with Chris Sibi adding another podium finish in third. Special awards were also presented to Seán Cafferty (2nd Year) as Most Improved Player and Mohamed Abdalatif (1st Year) as Best Newcomer, recognising their hard work and rapid development.

## School Chess Champion 2025 Sacha Perez Arancibia



Overall Winner Sacha Perez Arancibia being presented with the Simon Marshall Cup by the Principal Shaun Burke & Mr Joe Daly Chess Coordinator.

Our chess players also represented SGC superbly at the ChessZ Tournament hosted by Sacred Heart School, Westport. The team enjoyed a fantastic day, achieving a clean sweep in the Boys' Team section and taking first and second place in the Individual Champions section. Their performances reflected both their skill at the board and their excellent sportsmanship throughout the day.

Well done to all students who took part in chess this year. Your dedication, strategic thinking, and respect for the game continue to make chess at SGC something to be proud of.

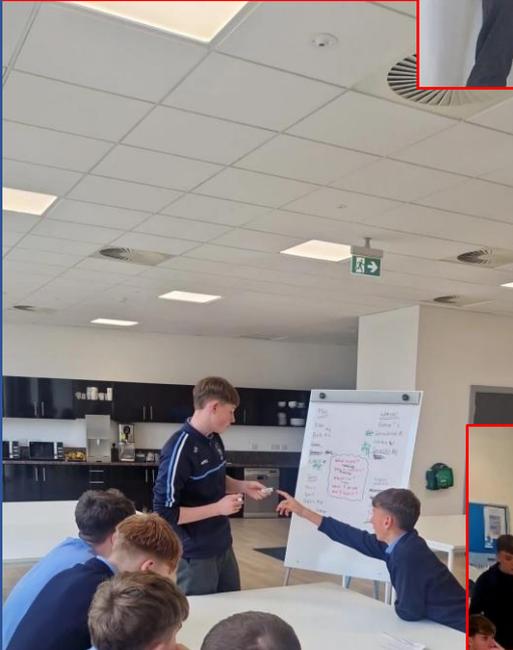
# Finalists of the Simon Marshall Cup 2025



L-R Mr Joe Daly Chess Coordinator, Dmytro Krys, Denys Hurin, Myroslav Savenko, Mohamed Abdalatif, Neitas Valiulas, Oscar Diffily, Chris Sibi, Joe Scully, Sacha Perez, Lovemore Gwenzi, Seán Cafferty, Tomás Cafferty, Mateo Walker, Rehman Khan, Paddy Connolly, Principal Shaun Burke.

## Business & Enterprise Learning at Meissner

In October 2025, Ms Flynn's 6th Year Business class visited Meissner Manufacturing in Castlebar, followed by a visit from her 5th Year Business class on 4th November 2025. Students explored leadership, teamwork and real-world business operations. They gained an informative, real-world look at how a multinational company operates and witnessed classroom concepts come to life. Thank you to all involved.



## Science & Sustainability in Action

On 14th October 2025, 1st Year students showcased creativity and scientific understanding during their Cell Model & Poster Competition. In late November 2025, the school also won a Brother A50 sewing machine through the Relove Fashion competition, with 1st Years taking part in a sustainability workshop focused on creative reuse of textiles.





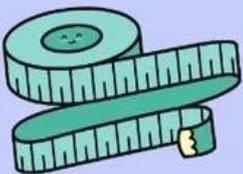
*Ezekiel:  
Winner of  
Maths  
Treasure  
hunt*



During October 2025, Maths Week brought daily challenges, quizzes, bingo and poster competitions. Students across year groups engaged enthusiastically, promoting problem-solving, collaboration and confidence in numeracy.



# Maths Week 2025!



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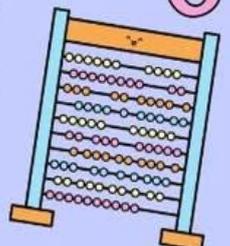
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## Geography Awareness Week:

In late November 2025, Geography Awareness Week featured quizzes, litter picks and a highly creative poster competition. Students explored climate change, mapping, flags of Europe and environmental awareness through art

## EPA Biology Field Trip:

On 2nd December 2025, 5th Year Biology students visited the EPA in Castlebar, learning about water sampling, licensing processes and laboratory analysis, linking classroom learning to real-world environmental science.



## CAREERS, GUIDANCE & FUTURE PATHWAYS

### *University & College Visits*

Across October and November 2025, students attended Open Days at ATU Mayo, ATU Sligo, the University of Galway and UL/TUS/Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. This was very enjoyable, with students gaining a wealth of knowledge and information on potential career pathways.



***The Future is  
Bright!***

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting students in making informed decisions about their future, a range of University & College Visits and career-focused talks took place across October and November 2025.

During this period, students attended Open Days at ATU Mayo, ATU Sligo, the University of Galway, and participated in a combined visit to UL, TUS, and Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. These visits allowed students to experience campus life first-hand, explore courses and facilities, and gain a clearer understanding of the academic and personal opportunities available at third level.

Complementing these visits was the Careers Connect Speaker Series, which brought a number of distinguished professionals to speak with our students. We were delighted to welcome:

- Dr John Fullard, Mount Sinai, New York
- Dr Paul O'Grady, International Orthopaedic Surgery
- Niall O'Hara, Machine Learning Engineer, Stripe

Each speaker shared their unique career journey, offering valuable insights into their fields and emphasising the importance of remaining open-minded, adaptable, and resilient when planning for the future. The talks were both inspiring and informative, encouraging students to consider a wide range of pathways and possibilities.

Together, these visits and talks provided students with meaningful exposure to third-level education and diverse career options, further supporting them as they plan their next steps beyond school.



## *Careers Connect Speaker Series*

Throughout October and November 2025, students heard from Dr John Fullard (Mount Sinai, New York), Dr Paul O'Grady (International Orthopaedic Surgery) and Niall O'Hara (Machine Learning Engineer, Stripe). Each speaker shared unique career journeys and encouraged students to remain open-minded and resilient. The students learned a great deal about different areas of work and opportunities that are available. Thank you to all our speakers.



# MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY TALK



# UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY TALK



UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



**UL Kemmy Business School visited our sixth - year business class to inspire them with many exciting business careers and give them an insight into the campus.**

AUGUST - DECEMBER 2025

# SGC GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT



*Pictured at SGC College and Career Fair 2025  
John Horkan, Shane Burke, James Murray, John McHugh, John Mulroy (President Castlebar Rotary Club) Fiona Byrnes, and Prof. Paul O'Grady, pictured with  
Shaun Burke Principal, Sharon Geraghty Careers Fair facilitator, Liam Connell and Regina Duffy Deputy Principal, St Gerald' College.*

## College & Career Fair 2025



November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025

As part of College Awareness Week 2025, St. Gerald's DLS College proudly hosted our third annual College and Careers Event on Wednesday, 19th November, and it proved to be a resounding success.



The event was open to TY, LCA, 5th Year, and 6th Year students, along with their families, and provided an invaluable opportunity to explore future education and career pathways. On the night, over 500 people passed through the doors, reflecting the strong interest and commitment within our school community to planning for life beyond school.

Attendees had the opportunity to engage with representatives from a wide range of universities and colleges, as well as over 40 industry experts, who generously shared their knowledge, experience, and advice. Students were encouraged to ask questions, gather information, and gain inspiration as they considered their future options.

The evening was informative, engaging, and highly motivating, and it was a fitting centrepiece to our College Awareness Week celebrations. A sincere thank you to all visiting colleges, industry representatives, staff, and students who contributed to making the event such a memorable and worthwhile experience.



## Mock Interviews with Castlebar Rotary Club – 4th December

Our Senior Cycle students thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the recent Mock Interview Experience, held on 4th December in partnership with the Castlebar Rotary Club. This highly valuable initiative gave students an excellent opportunity to experience a realistic interview setting and to develop the confidence and skills needed for future interviews and career pathways.

On the evening, fifty Senior Cycle students engaged enthusiastically in the process. Members of the Castlebar Rotary Club posed thoughtful, challenging questions, mirroring real-world interview scenarios. Each student also received constructive and supportive feedback following their interview, helping to boost confidence and improve interview readiness.



The overwhelmingly positive feedback from students highlighted just how beneficial and impactful the experience was, underlining the importance of initiatives such as this in preparing students for life beyond school.

A special word of thanks to Professor Paul O'Grady, the Castlebar Rotary Club, and Ms. Geraghty for coordinating and supporting this very successful evening. Their time, expertise, and guidance are greatly appreciated. Well done to all involved in making this event such a success.



*Celebrating  
European Day of  
Languages 2025!*



# **EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES 2025**

Celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025

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Tá Lá Eorpach na dTeangacha 2025 ann inniu!

¡Hoy es el Día Europeo de los Idiomas 2025!

Aujourd'hui, c'est la Journée Européenne des Langues  
2025 !

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On 26th September 2025, students celebrated linguistic and cultural diversity through activities, quizzes and themed celebrations across the school.

***Thank you to all that took part in this celebration!***

# Spotlight on: Transition Year!

Our transition year students enjoyed a bonding trip to Mayo Leisure Point in August. This was an enjoyable day for all, bringing out competitive streaks and consolidating friendships both new and old!



# World Mental Health Day

On 10th October 2025, TY students marked World Mental Health Day at Brú Castlebar, engaging in wellbeing workshops and discussions with local mental health organisations. Students recognised the importance of mental health and were encouraged to take some time to chat and check in over tea and coffee. Thank you to all involved.



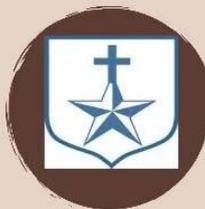
## ***TY 'Stay Safe, Stay Sober Talk'***

On 7th October 2025, TY students took part in an important drug and alcohol awareness talk delivered by Garda Mick Tolan and Bernie Avdic from the Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force. The session promoted informed decision-making and student wellbeing.



## *TY Barista Course*

# BARISTA COURSE



In November, TY students completed a Barista Training Course with Darren from DBarista. Students learned how to prepare a range of different hot beverages and completed barista training. This will no doubt help with future employment and emphasised the skillset required for the working world. Well done to all involved!

## *TY Life Skills Workshop*



In November 2025, TY students took part in a Life Skills workshop covering hygiene, grooming, skincare and healthy lifestyle habits, promoting confidence and self-respect. This was highly informative and students were given the opportunity to get involved.



## *Rugby*



In November 2025, TY students volunteered at a primary schools rugby blitz, hosted by Castlebar Rugby Club. They aided in helping with organisation and the running of activities. Their leadership and generosity ensured a fantastic day for the younger pupils.

## ***Delphi Adventure Trip***

In November, the transition years set off to Delphi to experience adventure. They completed a number of different activities encouraging communication, teamwork and leadership. This also remained a bonding experience, developing confidence and resilience.



GIVE WEST  
**SLEEP OUT**



# St. Gerald's DLS College

Created by **Galway Simon Community**



## *Simon Sleep Out*



# Spotlight On: LCA!



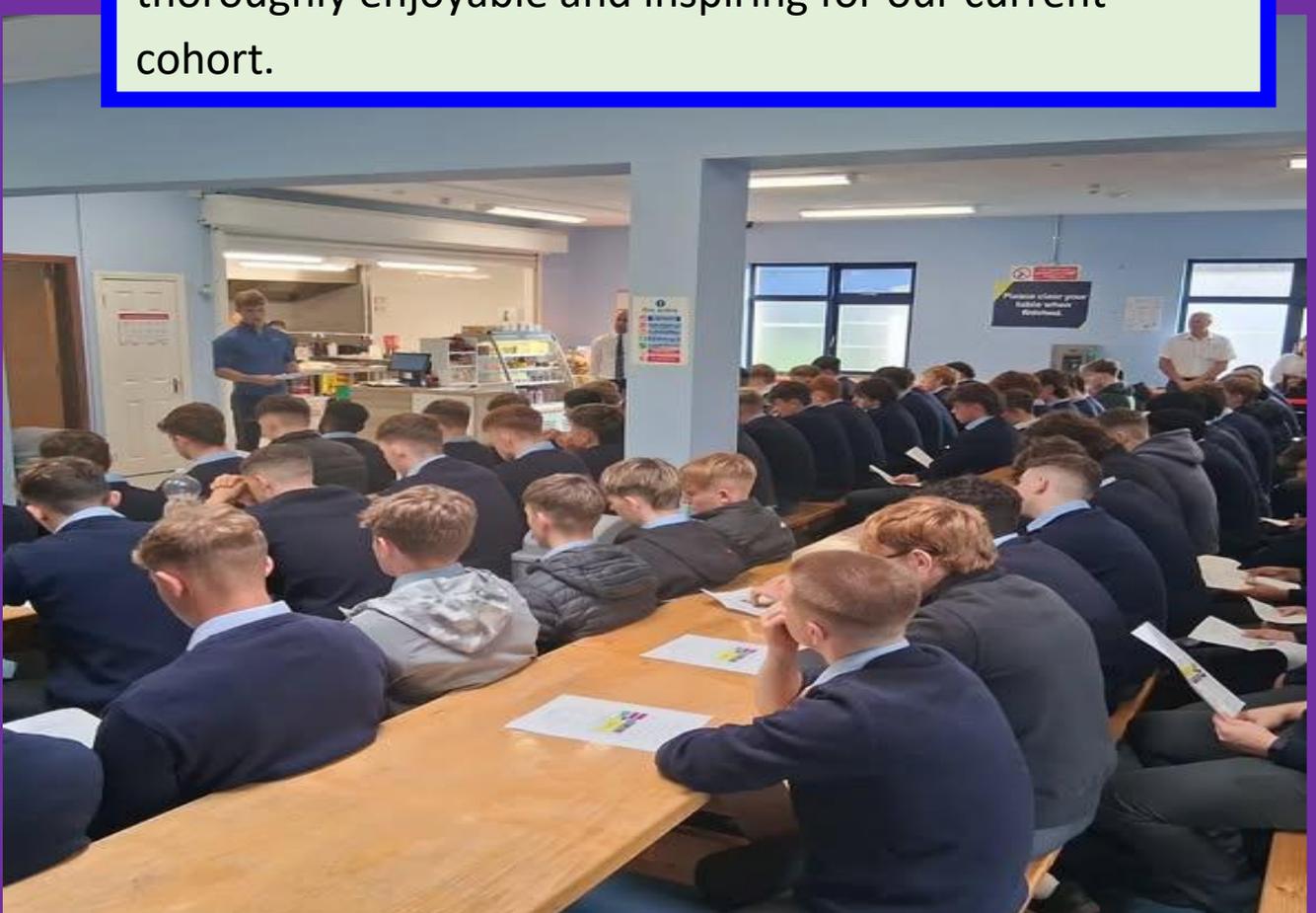
Our LCA students enjoyed a Christmas visit to the local men's shed. They had wonderful conversations over tea and biscuits on a cold December Tuesday! This gave the LCAs a hands – on lesson in community, topped off by some of the lads turning eighteen.

Below: Climbing Croagh Patrick in the snow! Ms Flynn's class faced frosty, challenging conditions in November and successfully raised €1,241 for Movember, supporting men's health.





We were delighted to welcome past pupils John MacMonagle and Carl Jackson to the school to provide talks to our current Leaving Certificate students regarding future plans and pathways. This was thoroughly enjoyable and inspiring for our current cohort.





Some snippets from our photography and young farmers clubs, as well as our green schools initiative.



## SGC YOUNG FARMERS



## Green Schools





***Gaeilge!***

**Comhairle na nÓg  
Representation:**

On 3rd November 2025, students represented St. Gerald's at the Mayo Comhairle na nÓg, engaging in debate and youth advocacy with students from across the county. Well done to all involved.



# Sporting Life!

Sport is very important here in St. Gerald's. Sport plays a vital role in supporting physical health and personal and social development. Participation in sport teaches important life skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership, and resilience. It emphasises goal setting and managing success and failure. This is evident throughout the school community, with students involved in Gaelic football, soccer, basketball, rugby, golf, hurling and swimming to name a few. It also plays a key role in school pride. Gaelic football saw the first years take part in a Gaelic blitz in August. We were also successful in becoming O'Haire cup champions in November. Soccer provided us with a first - year victory on the 26th November 2025, achieving victory over Claregalway. We were also crowned U15 group winners on November 27<sup>th</sup>, achieving victory over Athenry. Our U16 & U19 basketball teams claimed victories against St Louis and Gortnor Abbey in November, with the first - year basketballers progressing to the next round of cup action on December 15<sup>th</sup>. We reached the Connacht Scratch Qualifier in Golf in September and welcomed a Connacht Schools Champion in Paddy Hope in October. We claimed Connacht Schools Championships medals in swimming on the 9th November, with a similar victory in tennis. Our senior footballers are currently progressing through championship glory, and this is only a snippet of all that is going on! SGC Abú!





# *Gaelic Football*





# Soccer





# SGC U16 BASKETBALL TEAM!



# *Basketball*



# Schools Golf

*Cannaught Winner!!!*

GOLF IRELAND



# Golf





# *Tennis*





*Ireland vs Japan in the  
Aviva Stadium - Rugby*



*Sports Day 2025-2026*







ALL OF US AT  
ST. GERALD'S DLS COLLEGE  
WISH YOU A



# Merry Christmas

AND A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR!



