

Balla Secondary School

Quality education in a caring environment



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Balla Secondary School

Principal's Welcome



Welcome to the Balla Secondary School Prospectus

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Balla Secondary School prospectus, where we aim to give you a true sense of what it means to be part of our school community.



At Balla Secondary School, we are more than just a place of learning. We are a close-knit, engaged, and supportive community where pastoral care is at the heart of everything we do. I often describe our school as a “big, small school” big enough to offer a wide range of opportunities and experiences, yet small enough that we truly get to know each student. We recognise their individual strengths, unique personalities, and aspirations, and we are committed to helping them achieve their full potential.

Founded by the Sisters of St. Louis in 1920, our school is deeply rooted in its history and traditions. We proudly uphold values such as respect, tolerance, and kindness, while maintaining a progressive approach to education. With a dedicated team of passionate teachers and excellent facilities, we prepare our students not just for academic success but for the challenges and opportunities that await them in college, careers, and life beyond.

Nestled in the picturesque, rural setting of Balla, our location offers students a joyful and secure environment in which to flourish. We consistently rank among the top schools in the county for academic progress, regularly featuring on the Feeder Schools Leader Board. Our focus on personal development extends beyond the classroom, with a rich and diverse range of extracurricular activities designed to nurture creativity, health, and well-rounded growth.

While we take great pride in the academic and extracurricular achievements of our students, our greatest pride lies in the students themselves. They are the heart and soul of our school, and their personal growth, integrity, and sense of community are our most cherished accomplishments.

I hope this prospectus gives you a glimpse into the vibrant, nurturing environment that defines Balla Secondary School. If what you read resonates with you, I warmly invite you to visit us in person and experience first hand the special qualities that make our school such a remarkable place to learn and grow. I look forward to welcoming you.

Teresa Walsh

Principal

Balla Secondary School

Junior Cycle Curriculum

Students study four **core** subjects, four **optional** subjects and four short courses for Junior Cycle

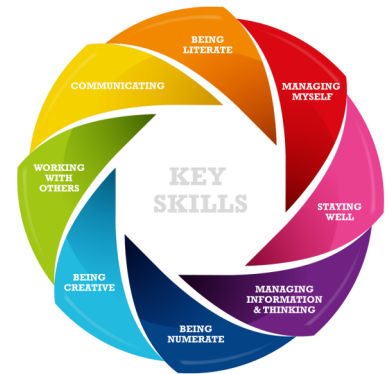


CORE EXAMINATION SUBJECTS

Irish, English, Mathematics, and History

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

Spanish, French, Science, Geography, Business Studies, Music, Home Economics, Art, Materials Technology (Wood), Technical Graphics



WELLBEING & SHORT COURSES

Physical Education, Coding, Digital Media, Choir, SPHE, CSPE, Religion, Career Guidance, Environmental Studies and Artistic Performance

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS TASTER

At Balla Secondary School all incoming first year students are required to give their preferred subject options at enrolment. They have the opportunity to complete a short taster in other optional subjects, if space permits, before they make a final choice for their Junior Cycle.

Additional Education Needs

Balla Secondary School has a policy of integration and inclusion for all students. The school provides a comprehensive additional education programme with a number of additional education teachers and special needs assistants being employed. The education support team liaises with the Department of Education, the psychological services and all relevant outside agencies in order to maximise the potential of all students.



Balla Secondary School

Senior Cycle



There are **four** programmes in the **Senior Cycle**. Students may take a Transition Year **or** they may go directly into Leaving Certificate Programmes where there are two distinct two year Leaving Certificate options – Traditional Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied. Within the traditional Leaving Certificate is a special programme called the Leaving Certificate Life, Community & Work programme.

Option 1 TRANSITION YEAR

This is the year after Junior Cycle, during which a student can take the opportunity to develop personally, develop skills and take a year out from the pressures of examinations and consider what path they wish to follow in the future.

Advantages: Students' development is encouraged through sport, the arts, social action, work experience, critical thinking, various skills and teamwork. **Core subjects are essential elements of the Transition Year.** Research has shown that those students who participate fully in Transition Year generally perform better in the Leaving Certificate and have less difficulty with the independent learning style required in third level institutions.



Option 2 LEAVING CERTIFICATE (Traditional)

Core examination subjects: English, Irish, Mathematics

Optional examination subjects:

Academic: History, Geography, French, Spanish, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Agricultural Science, Business, Accounting, Music, LCPE.

Practical: Home Economics, Art, Design & Communication Graphics, Construction Studies.

Students normally study three core subjects and four optional subjects for Leaving Certificate



Balla Secondary School

Senior Cycle (continued)



Option 3 LIFE, COMMUNITY & WORK PROGRAMME (LCW)

The Life, Community & Work Programme (LCW) is an intervention designed to enhance the vocational dimension of the Leaving Certificate.

Programme Requirements:

- LCW students must take a minimum of five Leaving Certificate subjects at Higher, Ordinary or Foundation level including Irish.
- They must study the two link modules, Preparation for the World of Work and Enterprise Education.



Students will benefit by: Taking responsibility for their own learning; working as a member of a team; gaining knowledge of the world of work; learning about setting up and running enterprise activities and gaining skills such as analysis, research and ICT skills that will benefit them at third level.

Option 4 LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED PROGRAMME (LCA)

Leaving Certificate Applied is an **alternative** to the traditional Leaving Certificate. It is a two year programme designed to suit students who find academic work difficult. Students who wish to pursue courses in some third level colleges can do so by completing a further year in a Post-Leaving Certificate course. Leaving Certificate Applied does not suit students who wish to go directly to University.

Features of Leaving Certificate Applied:

- Each module is designed to last half a year and is examined at the end of that time.
- Modules are built around projects, tasks and activities.
- Work experience is an integral part of the programme & takes place every Monday
- Most marks are awarded for tasks & class work completed during the two years in school.





Balla Secondary School

PE, Sports & Extra Curricular



Balla Secondary School strongly promotes a healthy and active lifestyle for all our students. Our **large multipurpose sports hall, pitches and tennis courts** facilitates a broad, inclusive PE programme.

All students are encouraged to take part in our excellent extra-curricular sports programme, with teams and individuals under the guidance of our staff, excelling across a broad range of activities:

- Volleyball
- Gaelic Football
- Soccer
- Athletics

- Table Tennis
- Equestrian
- Handball
- Pickleball

- Golf
- Badminton
- Aquatics
- Basketball
- Olympic Handball

There is something for everyone at Balla Secondary School, so take the opportunity to try something new or strive to improve at your chosen sport. Boys and girls of all ages compete and enjoy regular success, with many of our students going on to compete at inter-county, inter-provincial and international level.



Transition Year students put their own coaching and leadership skills into practice, frequently visiting our local national schools to coach football and basketball as well as organising in-school tournaments for 1st and 2nd Year students.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

We encourage all our students to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The **school musical** is a major whole school event with participants from all year groups except exam years. Students are trained in the art of choreography, vocals and acting and in the skills of lighting and sound. It is a great experience for all involved.



Our students have participated and enjoyed success in a number of the following **competitions**: SciFest, Mental Health Public Speaking competition, Build a Bank competition, Mini Company competition, Credit Union quiz, Credit Union poster competitions and Coral Competitions.

Students are also encouraged to think of the needs of others and there is a long tradition of **fundraising** for local, national and third world projects e.g. Mayo-Roscommon Hospice, Western Care, Western Alzheimer's, Aware, Bóthar and Concern.

Balla Secondary School

Uniform. School Day & Transport



GIRLS UNIFORM:

- Grey uniform trousers or grey uniform skirt
- Blue shirt
- Navy blue **V-neck** jumper with school crest
- Plain **black** flat shoes



BOYS UNIFORM:

- Grey uniform trousers
- Blue shirt
- Navy blue **round neck** jumper with school crest
- Plain **black** flat shoes

PE UNIFORM:

- Blue & Navy crested T-shirt
- Navy crested tracksuit bottoms or navy leggings
- Navy & Blue crested Crew Neck
- Sports shoes with a grip that is suitable for indoor and outdoor use



SCHOOL DAY

- The School day runs from 8:55am-3:50pm Mon-Thurs and 8:55am-1:10pm on Fridays
- Mobile phones must be kept locked in a phone pouch for the duration of the school day as per the mobile phone policy.
- All first, second and third year **students must stay on the school grounds all day**. Supervision is provided at break and at lunchtime with numerous indoor and outdoor activities, clubs and games available for students.
- A canteen is available to buy lunch and healthy snacks



SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORT

- Please see www.buseireann.ie/schooltransport to apply for school bus transport.
- Please note parents/guardians should check the school bus transport site regularly for application dates & updates.



Balla Secondary School

Homework, Journal, Study & Pastoral Care



HOMEWORK

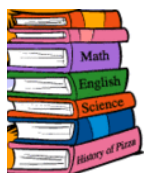
Homework is an essential part of learning and an important aspect of a student's programme. It helps students to develop perseverance, self-discipline and organisation.



Homework, each evening, may consist of the following:

- Preparation homework – given to prepare a student for upcoming lessons.
- Practice and revision homework – designed to reinforce lessons already taught in class.
- Extension/creative homework – intended to provide challenging learning opportunities for enrichment and extension of the lesson.

JOURNAL & STUDY



- Students must record their set homework in the school journal.
- Parents/Guardians must check and sign their children's journal every day. The Journal is used by the teacher to notify parents/guardians about the quality of students' work and any issues that may arise in class.
- After school study is available by arrangement



PASTORAL CARE

- Each class has a **Class Tutor** who takes a general interest in the welfare of the students in the class.
- Each year group has a **Year Head** who also takes a general interest in the welfare of the students in the year group. The Year Head attends to the general discipline of the students and their attendance.
- The **Guidance Counsellor** is available to discuss any problems a student may have. In addition to giving advice the Guidance Counsellor advises on subject choice and career matters.

