



ALUMNI AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Our new Principal

This term Dr Arthur Donnelly was appointed Principal of Rathmore, succeeding Mrs Thérèse Hamilton who retired at the end of the last academic year.

Dr Donnelly, who served as Vice Principal for Curriculum since 2013, has been a member of the teaching staff in Rathmore since 1993.

Following on from his role teaching Physics and coordinating Double Award Science, Dr Donnelly steered the school through its modernisation in a digital era, particularly in the use of IT and information systems to support and enhance school life across timetabling, reports, examinations, communications and most recently the school's integration of e-Learning.

It is timely that the school should be recognised as a Microsoft Showcase School as Dr Donnelly takes up his appointment, given his vision for enhancing learning and teaching through technology and ensuring that the school is equipped with first class resources to ensure our curriculum is future-ready and can support every pupil to succeed both now and in their future.



Dr Arthur Donnelly, congratulating our hurlers who were triumphant in the McFarland Cup.

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FROM OUR NEW PRINCIPAL

The first term of the new school year has been a busy one. Our priority, of course, has been to get the pupils back into the supportive routine of school life whilst keeping the whole school community as safe as possible. This has not been without its challenges, but pupils and staff alike have responded to the vagaries of life during the pandemic with admirable resilience and determination.

Masks, sanitizing, lateral flow tests and all our other mitigations may lend a curious aspect to life in school during the pandemic but there is still a lot to celebrate and enjoy in the exuberance and dedication of our pupils and staff as they get on with life, studies and the business at hand.

There could be no better tonic for the school community than our new Year 8 students who have swept onto the site with an irrepressible mix of excitement, curiosity and enthusiasm. At the other end of the spectrum our Upper Sixth students have been deep in the throes of the whole UCAS process making big decisions and planning for the future. Reading their personal statements and interviewing them I was truly impressed by their initiative, determination and inventiveness. They have grown and matured on their journey through Rathmore and are composed, articulate and passionate about the future. They certainly inspire hope and confidence and I have no doubt they will make a significant and positive impact wherever they may go.

Earlier in the term we had a visit from the captain of the Tyrone team, the current All-Ireland champions, with the Sam Maguire Cup. Their captain, Pádraig, obviously made an impression and we finished the term in style with our own success in Gaelic sports with our young hurlers winning the McFarland Cup.

And to round off the term we were delighted that the Religion, Music, Drama, Moving Image and Art departments were able to collaborate to produce a beautiful Carol Service, which enabled the students and whole school community to join in the celebration of Christmas, albeit in a virtual format. Our Catholic Caring campaign was another great success this term, a testament to the generosity of the school community, with sixty-five children being provided with gifts and toys, and eighty families with Christmas hampers.

We continue to invest in technology and have recently purchased an additional five *ActivPanels* to enrich pupil experience within the classroom. As you know Microsoft recognised Rathmore as a Showcase School at the beginning of the term. This comes on the back of a lot of hard work by the staff who continue to engage in training to ensure that they make best use of technology to support learning and teaching. We are grateful to all our parents who support the school with their voluntary contributions, allowing us to enhance the excellent educational opportunities for our students.

I have thoroughly enjoyed these first few months as Principal and am determined to ensure that our pupils remain at the heart of the School and that everything we do remains true to the vision of the Sisters of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Our mission statement remains relevant and important and the staff are united in their commitment to deliver on the promise of the school motto.

A happy and peaceful Christmas to you and I wish you all the best for the new year ahead.



Dr Donnelly pictured with All-Ireland winning Tyrone captain, Pádraig Hampsey at a special sports assembly to inspire the next generation of Rathmore teams.

FROM JOHN MORRISSEY, CHAIR OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Every four years new Governors are appointed to the Board by the Department of Education and we also seek nominations for Parent and Teacher Governors. I would like to congratulate Bronagh Mc Laughlin who has been appointed Parent Governor and Andrew Donnelly who has been re-appointed as Teacher Governor. The School has also appointed two new Trustee Governors, Katrien Roppe and Thomas McKenna. I look forward to working with all new Governors to help provide the best possible education and educational opportunities for all our pupils.

I would like to extend my thanks to all outgoing Governors for the exceptional contribution made by them in the past four years. It is also fitting to remember Sheila Fleming-Mitchell who served as a Departmental Governor on the Board from 2014. Sheila very sadly passed away after a short illness in June. She brought a strong business perspective to Board discussions but had the leadership skills to adapt her perspective to the complexities of running of a school. She gave her time generously to the School up to very shortly before she passed away. Her insight, experience and great good humour continue to be greatly missed.



Sheila Fleming-Mitchell, who served as a Departmental Governor on the Board from 2014.

OUR NEW YEAR 8 PUPILS



Our new Year 8 pupils have settled in well during the first term. It was wonderful that they were able to gather as a year group to celebrate their Welcome Mass with Fr James O'Reilly and also to take part in a retreat together as a tutor group.

They currently use the courtyard for outside games with their Buddies, which, again, has helped ease their transition into their new school and helped to foster and consolidate new friendships.



FUTURE FOCUSED

Donna Magee, our Bursar, keeps us posted on the work undertaken to develop our Alumni relations and Development Strategy.

Since school term recommenced we have continued to roll out and refine our Development Strategy.

In terms of technology and infrastructure, we have upgraded our printing and copying network across the school. Many of our devices were more than 12 years old and did not support the flexible way of working we are striving to embed, including the use of wireless technology and a more efficient use of resources. This change, along with the installation of LED lighting in January 2021, has already had an impact on our energy efficiency and shown a marked reduction in our carbon footprint.

We have an ambitious plan to replace the projectors in all classrooms with interactive panels to improve the learning and teaching experience and provide new ways to engage with pupils. To date we have installed panels in nearly one third of our classrooms and have plans to reach a target of panels installed in half of our classrooms by June 2022.

A further aspect of our Strategy is to engage with our alumni and friends network to create opportunities for learning and development for our pupils. We are very grateful to FinTru founder and CEO Darragh McCarthy who spoke to our sixth form pupils about his career and leadership journey and the importance of finding something you are passionate about when making career choices. We also want to thank the team of engineers from a locally based international survival technology company Survitec. The team, led by David Magee Coordinator of Operations, visited the school and gave an exciting and hands-on demonstration of one of the company's survival rafts allowing pupils to get a very practical understanding of a complex and vital piece of survival equipment.



Darragh McCarthy – FinTru founder and CEO, launches our Year 12 Careers Choices Programme.

David Magee – Co-ordinator of Operations at Survitec engages pupils with a hands-on demonstration.

Rathmore celebrates Microsoft Showcase School Award

We were delighted to receive the news that Rathmore Grammar School has been recognised by Microsoft as a 'Showcase School'. This global recognition serves to highlight our school as a leading institution that continuously develops and embraces new opportunities to support every pupil in their learning.

The school first learned of this recognition in an email from Anthony Salcito, Microsoft Vice President - Worldwide Education, that stated:

"Microsoft has recognized Rathmore Grammar School as a Showcase School, an elite group of schools that exemplify the best of teaching and learning in the world today. Only a few institutions earn this designation, and you can take pride in knowing that Microsoft recognises your impact on the future of education.

Microsoft Showcase Schools are pioneers in education. You are part of an exclusive global community, recognized and celebrated for educational transformation that includes vision and innovation in teaching, learning, and preparing students for the future".

This recognition serves to acknowledge the hard work, commitment and talent of all staff who embrace, through ongoing professional development, new ways to enhance learning and teaching. We are looking forward to continuing to share and learn from other leading schools in this elite global educational community.



When Microsoft visited Rathmore – Read more on our website.



Photos depicting two visits (October 2019 and January 2020) from a team of Principal Managers responsible for Microsoft Teams and OneNote

CAROL SERVICE

A worker, who quietly and diligently honoured God with his understated and even routine efforts, St Joseph was entrusted with a role that would serve to change history in a way that he could never have understood or imagined.

This was the theme woven through our Carol Service, dramatised by our Year 8 pupils, reflected beautifully in the spoken words of our Sixth Form and lifted by the voices of our school choirs.

Very few things sharpen the mind toward Advent and Christmas quite like the rousing sound of 'Gaudete'. Whether in person or virtual, taking time to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas as a school community continues to be a tradition that every pupil has the opportunity to share in.

Thank you to the RE, Music, Drama and Moving Image Arts departments for this beautiful reflection.



Watch our
virtual Carol
Service



Catholic Caring Campaign

Nothing captures our sense of community better than the efforts of every pupil and tutor group to buy toys and Christmas gifts for children in our local community and to provide hampers with festive treats for local families.

This year, our pupils were able to provide gifts for 65 children to open on Christmas morning and our pupils created a hamper for everyone on our list, with enough treats to make up 15 extra hampers!

This year our campaign was supported by the social workers in the Beech Hall Centre, who were so taken with the level of generosity that they came back to express the gratitude on behalf of the families who had received these gifts.





Our sports teams had the opportunity to hear how self-belief, determination and persistent hard work are key elements of success and building a winning mentality.

This was the message from All-Ireland winning Tyrone Captain Pádraig Hampsey who visited the school with the hope of inspiring our teams to future success.

It has been wonderful to see our pupils involved in after-school activities and the enjoyment they bring.

This Term saw our Year 8-10 camogie team win 7-1 to 2-2 and our Under 14 ½ hurlers winning the McFarland Cup. Our McLarnon panel lost out to St Louis, Ballymena but the experience will stand our young squad in good stead for next year.

Our Under 16 and Under 19 teams both played in the Ulster Final, where the Under 19s were victorious. Both teams have qualified for the All-Ireland play-offs.

Our youngest pupils are certainly raising the bar and we look forward to a bright future.



“Go out there and enjoy every second of playing in a final.”

Those were the half-time words of encouragement that settled the nerves of a Year 10 team who were anxiously holding on to a five point lead at the interval having trailed by the same difference at the first water break.

On a cold, crisp winter's evening at Cherryvale, the Under 14 ½ hurling team faced a skilful and determined Red High side. St Patrick's Downpatrick had already enjoyed getting the better of the Rathmore team during the group stages and who had immediately sparked into life taking the game under their control and easing into a five point lead. It seemed to all that the Rathmore boys had come as far as they could in this tournament.

What ensued after the first water break could only be described as inspirational, as Rathmore pulled back their confidence with each point scored. Each point hard won, each score lifting the shoulders of the players, who regained the stature and poise that had seen the team progress through a series of tough matches to make the final.

The half-time whistle could only serve to break the momentum gained and leave room to over think the lead that had been extended. A trophy well within reach. To edge this close to victory yet knowing that the game could turn at any time and that their opponents were a very close match and had already enjoyed the ascendancy once in this final.

“Go out there and enjoy yourselves, enjoy every second of playing for Rathmore in a final.” The words of a past-pupil who has been involved with the coaching of our school teams since he left in Upper Sixth. The words of experience from a pupil who has been in many similar games. The words that echoed what he had learnt from representing the school at every level - enjoy yourselves and the rest will come. This advice resonated with the players, and the second half was simply an exhibition from both sides of how a school hurling game should be played – skills in abundance a competitive spirit and a superb level of sportsmanship during and after the game. We look forward to seeing this team grow together under the experienced mentorship of their manager Mr Collins.

A Warm Congratulations.

