

Principal's Address



As Principal of Scoil Aireagail I welcome you to our school prospectus. I hope you find it informative and useful in helping to choose a suitable post primary school for your child.

Scoil Aireagail is a co-educational multi-denominational school whose mission statement is predicated on the needs and ambitions of all the students in its care. It is a thriving centre for education that provides a safe, positive and nurturing environment, allied to a professional focus on high quality teaching and learning.

Scoil Aireagail's reputation for excellence is rooted in a dedicated staff. We strive for excellence and high standards in all aspects of our students' education and are committed to realising the potential of each individual student.

Scoil Aireagail has high expectations for all its students and strives for academic excellence in all areas. It is also committed to the welfare and holistic development of the students. These dual values of achievement and personal development are at the heart of our educational philosophy and guide our daily practice.

Scoil Aireagail has woven itself into the fabric of the community in South Kilkenny for generations. I hope to see this relationship strengthen further and look forward to working and engaging with all in our school community in order to fulfill our shared aspirations for the students.

Principal,

Mr. Liam O'Brien

History and Tradition

Scoil Aireagail began serving the educational needs of the community in 1959. From humble beginnings, two classrooms and an office preparing students for the group certificate, it has grown into the modern centre for education it is today. As enrolment quickly grew the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate programmes were added to the curriculum. The increasing enrolment also necessitated the provision of an expanded school campus. New school buildings were added in 1986 and 1999 with the most recent extension occurring in 2009.

A defining feature of the school throughout its development and growth has been its sense of community. It prides itself in playing a central role in the community of South Kilkenny. It prides itself also in loyally serving the educational needs of the community. This loyalty has been duly reciprocated with generations of families having received an education at Scoil Aireagail, a testament to its educational ethos and values which have been evident from the school's inception to the present day.

As the school has evolved, so too has its educational remit. It has long since outgrown its important role in providing for vocational training. The expansion of the curriculum has seen the majority of its students graduating to third level education. Scoil Aireagail is now the natural choice for students of all abilities, confident in the knowledge that the school's focus on academic achievement and student care will enable them to realize their ambitions.

In 2017 Scoil Aireagail was recognised as the third most improved school in the country over the previous eight years (Irish Independent League Tables). This achievement was the fruit borne from the collective effort of all in the school community and their dedication to a shared vision for the students.



Scoil Aireagail –

Third Most Improved School in Ireland 2009-2017

Scoil Aireagail was recognised as the third most improved school in the country over the previous eight years by the Sunday Independent in its 2017 League Tables edition.

Scoil Aireagail increased its number of students in third level from 51% eight years ago to 100% last year. Almost two thirds (63%) of their students secured college places in the same period and 22% have gone on to university. The school's principal Liam O' Brien attributes much of this success to group work and the effort put in by students and teachers.

"Quality teaching and learning is the core business of the school and we have put a lot of effort into introducing progressive teaching methodologies in the school, such as co-operative learning. It brings about a more engaged student and a more committed student. We have a school improvement plan in place which is working to good effect."

"The most important thing is that we have high expectations for the students and this is constantly communicated to them and the wider school community. Our teachers expect a high standard of work and dedication from the students."

The principal concludes:

"We have a very dedicated staff here who go well beyond the call of duty. Because we are a relatively small school there is a strong relationship between the teachers and students and that is the basis for getting real commitment from the students."

(Excerpt from Sunday Independent newspaper article published in January 2017)



School Curriculum

Our curriculum constantly adapts to meet the changing needs of students and offers a diverse range of subjects at all levels in both Junior and Senior Cycle. The New Junior Cycle (NJC) is currently being introduced on a gradual basis in all schools across the country. Scoil Aireagail is well prepared for the necessary changes to the junior cycle curriculum. The curriculum is based on the best educational outcomes for the students and the requirements of the NJC.

Junior Cycle Curriculum

First Year students study all eight core subjects in their first year. At the end of their first year, they choose between Business Studies and History to continue to study for the NJC. With their two optional subjects they will have nine subjects for certification (exam subjects) for their NJC. This recommendation from the Department of Education will allow students and teachers more time to engage with their respective subjects more positively and in greater depth. Students will also be enabled to engage in the “wellbeing” aspect of the NJC. From September to December in their first year students are offered ‘taster’ periods in all six optional subjects before choosing two subjects which they will remain studying for their NJC. They make this choice in December of their first year.

The school operates a system of mixed ability teaching in most subjects at Junior Cycle. Higher and Ordinary level classes are created in the some subject areas in second and third year. Students who have special educational needs are supported in their subjects within small groups. All subjects in Junior and Senior Cycle are available at higher and ordinary level.

Junior Cycle – Core Subjects

English
Irish
Maths
History
Geography
French
Business Studies
Science

Optional Subjects

Metalwork
Woodwork
Art
Music
Home Economics
Technical Graphics

Short Courses

PE
CSPE

Non Exam

Religion
SPHE
ICT



Senior Cycle Curriculum

Senior Cycle students follow a two year programme leading to the Leaving Certificate Examination. During Transition Year students are given the opportunity to sample all Leaving Certificate subjects, therefore assisting them in making their subject choice for senior cycle. Subjects are offered at all levels with students being encouraged to pursue subjects at higher level.

We take a student centred approach to subject options where students are surveyed well in advance of entering senior cycle. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that student preference is met. Students are provided with advice and guidance, through our career guidance service, when it comes to making subject choices appropriate to their abilities, interests and aptitudes. The following subjects are offered in Scoil Aireagail at senior cycle.

Senior Cycle – 2 Years

English

Irish

Mathematics

French

History

Geography

Biology

Chemistry

Business Studies

Accounting

Art

Music

Engineering

Agricultural Science

Construction Studies

Home Economics

Design & Communication Graphics

Religious Education

Physical Education

Careers



Transition Year

Transition Year is an optional programme for students who have completed their Junior Cycle. The majority of our students choose to undertake Transition Year as it provides an extremely beneficial set of experiences before they embark on the Leaving Certificate Programme.

The Transition Year Programme in Scoil Aireagail is a very well planned course, designed to enable our students to explore and develop their natural talents and skills, while providing an opportunity to engage in a host of activities and events throughout the year. It enhances their self esteem and enables students to mature as young adults. There is a good balance struck between the academic and practical dimensions. Work experience is an integral component of the programme, enabling students to develop critical life skills.

Transition Year – 1 Year

English

Irish

Maths

French

Physical Education

Construction Studies

Engineering

Art

Music

Computers

History

Geography

Biology

Agricultural Science

Religious Education

Sociology

Business Studies

Home Economics

Design & Communication Graphics

Careers



School Life

Participation in **Extra-Curricular** activities plays a hugely important role in the educational process. At Scoil Aireagail students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities, whether they be artistic, social or sporting in nature.

- *The annual Christmas concert showcases the musical talent of the students as well as acting as a fundraiser for a local charity.*
- *Students are encouraged to enter numerous art competitions and have been successful on many occasions. The school's entries to the Iverk Craft Show have won a multitude of awards.*
- *Students have raised funds for many causes including Chernobyl Aid Ireland (€150,000 over 20 years), St. Vincent de Paul, Breast Cancer Ireland, Childline, Cycle for Syria and other worthy causes.*
- *Scoil Aireagail has a strong tradition in public speaking competitions.*
- *The Green Schools Committee promotes environmental issues.*
- *School trips and tours are a regular feature of school life. These include year group day trips, Transition Year tours and Gaeltacht tours.*
- *The 2016 Junk Couture entry reached the regional finals.*



Sport

Scoil Aireagail boasts a proud tradition of sporting participation and success in a variety of sports. The school has enjoyed success in many sporting disciplines over the years and students are offered the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of sports while at Scoil Aireagail.

Hurling and Camogie

Hurling and camogie are of course very much part of our culture, where our school teams have been hugely successful at local and interprovincial level. The senior hurling team were Leinster champions in 2012, the Juniors South Leinster champions in 2013. The school's hurling and camogie teams contest South Leinster finals in all grades on a regular basis.

Indeed, many of our past students have gone on to play for their county. The school has contributed significantly to the Kilkenny hurling cause. In the last twelve years alone students from Scoil Aireagail have won over 60 All-Ireland medals at various levels, including minor and senior All-Irelands and club All-Irelands.

Other Sports

Our boys and girls are also involved in Gaelic Football, Basketball, Handball, Soccer, Badminton, Athletics, Girls 2 Mile Challenge and Golf.



Facilities

Scoil Aireagail is well equipped to provide an environment which is safe and comfortable, where all classrooms are fully equipped to facilitate high quality teaching and learning.

Our modern facilities include the following specialist rooms:

- *Materials Technology Wood/Construction*
- *Metalwork/Engineering*
- *Art*
- *Two Science Laboratories*
- *Design & Communication Graphics*
- *Two Computer rooms*
- *Home Economics*
- *School library*
- *Music room*
- *Resource classrooms for one-to-one tuition*
- *Career guidance office*
- *ASD Unit*



Other facilities include:

- *Sports Hall*
- *Outdoor sports area*
- *Access to outdoor pitches*
- *Canteen facilities*



Efforts are ongoing to further improve and modernise our facilities.



Student Supports

Pastoral care is integral to the school's mission statement. Scoil Aireagail offers the following supports to ensure that student welfare is catered for, enabling them to reach their potential.

Class Teacher and Year Head

Each student is assigned a class teacher whose role is to act as a mentor for each student in his or her class. If a student has difficulties the class teacher will be the first person to deal with that difficulty. The class teacher will also encourage positive behaviour from students, and will sign the students' homework diary each week. The matters dealt with by the class teacher will mainly be homework, discipline, uniform, and general behaviour. The respective Year Heads also play a vital role in catering for the pastoral, educational and disciplinary needs of the students and the school.

Support / Resource Teachers

We have a very thorough, efficient and effective support education system in the school. We screen every new entrant and, as resources permit, provide literacy and numeracy support services to students in small groups. Progress is monitored and parents/guardians are kept informed through consultation and Parent/Teacher meetings.

Career Guidance

The guidance and counselling service is well established in Scoil Aireagail. This service refers to a range of learning experiences designed to assist students to make appropriate and informed choices about their lives. The service provides for the personal and social, educational and vocational development of its students. The guidance and counselling process endeavours to help students to grow in self-knowledge and self-esteem by assisting them:

- *to understand their emotions, abilities, interests and special aptitudes*
- *to acquire information about educational and career opportunities within a changing society*
- *to make and carry out appropriate life choices and plans and to achieve satisfactory adjustments in life*

Students can avail of this service by making appointments. Referrals to outside agencies are made through the Principal with parental consent.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (A.S.D.) Unit

Scoil Aireagail provides a specialist learning resource and facility for students who are within the autistic spectrum. Specially trained staff put together a learning programme specific to the needs of each individual child, with clearly identified learning objectives. These programmes are largely based on reports from primary school where the child previously attended. Input from parents is also very important here. Regular contact with parents is maintained throughout, where feedback and progress reports are provided to parents.

Supervised Study

All students are encouraged to join our supervised study facility. Study sessions occur every evening for two hours after school and are always supervised by a teacher. Study is on each evening from Monday to Friday, from 4 pm to 6 pm. The fee is kept to a minimum, and is an excellent opportunity for students to study in a quiet and comfortable environment.

Study Skills Seminars

The promotion of academic achievement lies at the core of teaching and learning practices at Scoil Aireagail. Study skills seminars are provided annually to students to inform students of best practice in relation to examination preparation.

Academic Excellence

The school places a strong emphasis on students achieving their potential in an environment of high quality teaching and learning. Students are encouraged to take subjects at higher level wherever possible. Student achievement at homework and in examinations is acknowledged and rewarded at the school's annual awards ceremony.

There is a strong tradition of excellent results in state examinations. In 2015 Scoil Aireagail students exceeded the national average in students achieving 400 points or more in the Leaving Certificate: Scoil Aireagail 37%, national average 35 %. Congratulations to 2016 Student of the Year, Aisling Laherty, who achieved 525 points in her Leaving Certificate. Past students have excelled in a wide variety of careers and third level institutions such as TCD, UCD, WIT, UCC, NUI Maynooth, UL, DCU, DIT and many more colleges across the country.



Our School Community

Board of Management

We have a very effective Board of Management which oversees the overall management of our school. Parents, teachers, Kilkenny/Carlow Education & Training Board and school management are represented on the board together with elected local representatives.

Parents' Association

Scoil Aireagail is fortunate to have a vibrant, energetic and highly motivated Parents' Association. Membership of the council is open to parents/guardians of all students attending the school. The members have contributed to the formulation of school policies and school improvement plans. In recent times the association has organized highly successful events such as an 'American Tea Party', 'Clothes Recycling Programme' and 'Tractor Run'. All of these events have raised funds which will go towards improving our facilities and school building.

Student Council

At Scoil Aireagail we encourage students to take part in the development of school policies and procedures. Each year, two representatives are elected from each class to form a Student Council. Anyone can put themselves forward to be elected. Once elected the council nominates a year group representative, a secretary and a chairperson. Scoil Aireagail strongly encourages every pupil to participate in the Council and to make every voice heard. It is an excellent means of promoting the democratic process and exercising student leadership.



School Day

Monday: 8.50 am – 3.50 pm

Tuesday : 8.50 am – 3.50 pm

Wednesday: 8.50 am – 1.10 pm

Thursday: 8.50 am – 3.50 pm

Friday: 8.50 am – 3.50 pm

Morning break: 10.50 to 11.10 am

Lunch break: 1.10 to 1.50 pm

Half Day on Wednesdays



What makes Scoil Aireagail Special

Student care and Discipline

A strong but caring approach to student care and discipline create the conditions for a positive environment for teaching and learning.

Sense of Community

The strong sense of community in the school promotes a strong sense of identity with the school, enriching the school experience.

Student Achievement

Student achievement across all aspects of school life, academic and extra-curricular, is celebrated and acknowledged at whole school assemblies and awards ceremonies.

An Extensive Range of Subject Choice and Smaller Class Sizes

The school offers a wide curriculum at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Smaller class size is a feature of many classes allowing for more individual attention for students.

High Expectations

High expectations for the students ensure that they consistently reach their academic potential obtaining excellent results in their Junior and Leaving Certificates.



Home-School Links

We at Scoil Aireagail recognize that a strong relationship between home and school is crucial to the success of each student. We operate an “open door” policy where meetings are arranged on request with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Career Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Class Teacher, Subject Teachers.

Student Journal

The school journal is a valuable means of communication between the school and the home.

Information Evenings

Parents/Guardians are invited to attend a number of information meetings during the course of each academic year.

Parent Teacher Meetings

Parent Teacher Meetings are held for each year group annually.

Website

Our school website scoilaireagail@eircom.net is regularly updated and contains the most up to date information on the school and school related activities.

SMS Text Messaging System

Parents/Guardians are informed of upcoming school events and changes to schedule through our web-text system. Parents are asked to ensure that the school office has the most up to date mobile number to ensure that they receive the texts.

Parents Association

The Parents’ Association is the parents’ representative association and offers a forum for parents’ views to be heard and for parents to make a contribution to the school on a number of different levels, from policy formulation to fundraising.



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