



May 14th, 2024.

A New Era

A Chara,

In 1905, the Commissioners of National Education imposed Rule 127 (b) on the national schools of Ireland. The Rule meant that Boys under eight years of age were ineligible for enrolment in a boys' school where there was no assistant mistress on the staff. Consequently, the pattern which we have become accustomed to was born, with boys enrolling with girls in junior classes to benefit from the instruction of the mistress prior to departing to an all-boys' school.

This wasn't the only reason for single gender schools, but it did provide a firm educational basis for their continued operation that pertained longer than it should.

While for some time there has been recognition that such thinking is outdated, the safety and security of established practice can often be easier to maintain than change, particularly when the individual reputations of Scoil Chroí Naofa and Athenry Boys School were held in such high esteem within the community.

The embrace for the change proposed by amalgamating our two schools has been heartening and has meant the process of bringing about the change has been an exciting journey where the consideration of the participants has been for the opportunities and possibilities the change presents. There is much to look forward to.

I am delighted to be writing to you today to give you all an update on the progression towards the establishment of our new amalgamated school which will formally open on Thursday August 29th this year.

On a personal note, I wish to sincerely thank all those who have played a part in bringing the project to this point and I look forward to working with all staff, members of the existing boards of management, parents and the office of the Patron in ensuring the continued transition from the existing schools to the new school is seamless.

Recently, we have enjoyed fantastic engagement from the community on the selection of a name for our new school. Over 300 people including parents, staff and members of the boards of management of both schools cast their preference from the names shortlisted by the subcommittee. The

community has decided that the school's name will directly match the locality it serves and will be known as Athenry Primary School.

The process of arriving at a new crest for the new school was equally as inclusive and encompassing of all parties to both schools. The final design is one that reflects the proud heritage and traditions of both schools and the history of the town.

The crest includes the Arch, the last surviving gate of the medieval town walls which has long been the emblem of the Boys School. The flame has been applied to the Arch symbolising Christ as the Light of the world and reminding us of the centrality of the Catholic Ethos in the life of new school. The flame is also a note to the origins of Scoil Chroí Naofa and its history as a school established under the patronage of the Presentation Sisters whose founder Nano Nagle was known as 'The Lady of the Lantern'. The children at the front of the image are active, happy and clearly eager as they engage in pursuits that have long been associated with both schools.

It seems entirely fitting to me that the crest was designed in a joint effort of twins Isobel and Isaac Heffernan, who are in 5th class in Scoil Chroí Naofa and The Boys School respectively. I wish to thank Isobel and Isaac's mother, Eiranne, for the great help provided in the process of refining and digitising the crest.

For the foreseeable future, the new school will operate across the two existing school buildings pending the development of new school. Classes from Junior Infants to 4th Class will be accommodated in Scoil Chroí Naofa while 5th and 6th class will be stationed in the existing Boy's School. This is the most practical solution given the breakdown of class numbers for the coming year and we hope that the numbers will allow this to become the annual solution but it's likely this will have to be reassessed on an annual basis.

There will be further details on the operation of the new school that will be developed over coming weeks including uniform, teachers, class make-up etc. and such detail will be provided in due course.

Again, I wish to thank everybody for their efforts to date and look forward to working with everyone in the completion of the Amalgamation Process.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Connolly'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Connolly

Principal

Athenry Primary School.