



# LAUREL HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL F.C.J.

Est. 1844 Foundress Madame d'Houet 1781 - 1858



*Courage and Confidence in the pursuit of*  
**EXCELLENCE**

- A Brief History of Our School
- Curriculum & Activities
- Our Philosophy of Education



## A Brief History of Our School

Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ traces its distinguished history back to 1844 when the Bishop of Limerick invited FCJ Foundress Marie Madeleine d'Houet to open a school. By the following year the Faithful Companions of Jesus had purchased the Laurel Hill property on magnificent grounds in Limerick. School life began with 33 day pupils and 11 boarders.

Over the next 175 years, Laurel Hill expanded and evolved as part of the FCJ international network of educational establishments – a leading school in Ireland.

With the setting up of the Board of Management in 1997, the school moved easily into a new era that looks confidently forward while embracing the finest traditions of the past. Laurel Hill boasts of a long and proud tradition of over 175 years of Christian Education. In 1846, the European Dream found a home in Laurel Hill. The rich linguistic, aesthetic, religious and cultural heritage of Europe, brought here by the Foundress and the early Companions, blended with strong Celtic traditions of our people. Inspired by this dream, Laurel Hill students have been greatly enriched over the years through their education for life and for European and World Citizenship.



In 2009 Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ became a member of the Le Chéile Schools Trust, which is a collaborative trust set up to carry out the role of the patron previously exercised by the congregation.

*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*

## Laurel Hill FCJ Philosophy of Education

Companionship is central to the FCJ Philosophy of Education. It is particularly expressed through faithfulness, gentleness and respect. In the spirit of the FCJ Foundress, Marie Madeleine d'Houet, the school seeks to create a caring atmosphere where all can find a place and feel valued. The uniqueness of each person is respected and all are invited to use their gift for the service of others, for the transformation of society and the coming of the reign of God. All education programmes and activities emphasise the formation of the whole person.

The FCJ school community seeks to provide a stimulating and supportive environment, encouraging all to develop their full potential, with a special care for those deprived in any way.

Responsible citizenship, cultural identity, care for the environment and peace that does justice are fundamental principles in FCJ education philosophy. On-going reflection, evaluation and innovation ensure that the school is open to the signs of the times. Each member of the school community is committed to work in the light of Gospel values and in response to Jesus cry "I thirst" as spoken in the world today, Mary, mother of God, has a special place in FCJ tradition and in our school. Through "finding God in all things", FCJ schools strive to be nurturers of life and joyful messengers of hope and love, inspired by the mission of Jesus, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10).



## Principal's Address

Welcome to Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ Limerick. Founded by the F.C.J. Sisters in 1844, the school has a long tradition of providing excellent education for the girls of Limerick City and the its environs.

Our school motto 'Courage and confidence in pursuit of excellence' underpins all aspects life here in Laurel Hill Secondary F.C.J. We cherish the individuality and talents of each student entrusted to our care. We challenge each student to fulfil her potential and place great importance on care and respect.

Our students are supported on their educational journey by a dedicated and committed staff. We recognise that each one of students has a valuable contribution to make to our school and will leave their own distinctive footprints.

We offer a broad curriculum that is complemented by a comprehensive extra-curricular and co-curricular programme and our student support services are designed to ensure that the individual needs of each student are addressed.

We pride ourselves on our excellent academic results and the numerous successes and achievements enjoyed by our students and staff members down through the years.

This prospectus is designed to provide you with some introductory information to give you and your daughter a taste of the many and varied activities that we have to offer here in Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ Limerick.



Michael Cregan



Susan Garraghy



## Academic Success

Laurel Hill Secondary School F.C.J. has always been associated with academic excellence with our students achieving far above the national average in state exams annually. Listed by the Sunday times (2020) as the 'Top School in Munster'.

Our students have received entrance scholarships to universities annually based on their outstanding Leaving Certificate results including TCD (Trinity College Dublin), UCD (University College Dublin), UCC (University College Cork), NUIG (National University of Galway), UL (University College Limerick) and MIC (Mary Immaculate College Limerick).

A number of students have succeeded in gaining sports scholarships to a number of universities. Other academic awards presented to our students based on the results of the Leaving Certificate include the JP McManus All Ireland Scholarship.







*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.*

## Junior Cycle Curriculum

In Junior Cycle our students experience a wide variety of subjects and are prepared for the Junior Certificate which takes place at the end of third year. Subjects (for examination) are available at higher and ordinary levels.

### Core Subjects

Irish  
English  
Mathematics  
French  
Science  
Geography  
History  
Physical Education  
Computer Studies  
Religious Education  
Well being  
CSPE  
SPHE



### Elective Subjects

Spanish  
Home Economics  
Technical Graphics  
Music  
Art, Craft and Design  
Business Studies

First year students will study all core subjects and also choose two optional subjects to study as part of their Junior Cycle Program. Students study a total of nine subjects for their Junior Certificate Examination.



**The eight key skills of the Junior Cycle are embedded into all aspects of the Junior Cycle Curriculum**





## Senior Cycle Curriculum

### Leaving Certificate Established

Senior Cycle students follow a two year programme leading to the Leaving Certificate examination. Subjects are offered at all levels.

During Transition Year students are given the opportunity to sample all Leaving Cert subjects therefore assisting them in making their subject choice for Senior Cycle.

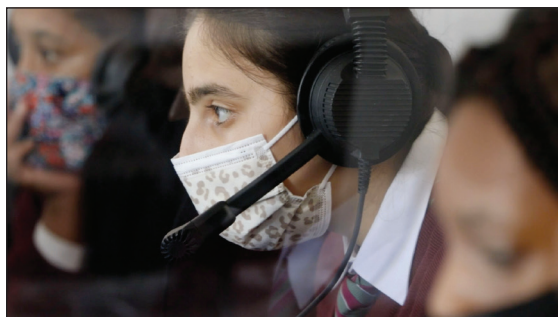
Senior Cycle students will study all core subjects and also choose three optional subjects to study as part of their Leaving Certificate examination. Students select a total of seven subjects for Leaving Certificate Examination.

### Core Subjects

Irish	English
Mathematics	French
Religious Studies	Physical Education
Career Guidance	

### Elective Subjects

Biology	Chemistry
Physics	Agricultural Science
Business	Economics
Accounting	Geography
History	Politics and Society
Home Economics	Art
Music	Physical Education
Technology	Spanish



### Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

LCVP is an enhanced Leaving Certificate Programme. Students who have specific subject combinations (as laid down by the DES) qualify to take 'Link Modules'. Enterprise, Preparation for the World of Work and Work Experience.

It is an extremely worthwhile programme that combines the academic strengths of the Leaving Certificate with a dynamic focus on self-directed learning, enterprise, work experience and community.





## Transition Year

Transition Year provides a bridge between Junior and Senior Cycle. This year focuses on developing each individual student as a person. It encourages pupils to become more independent and to explore new interests both inside and outside the classroom setting. The year equips students with the skills they require to embark on their journey towards Senior Cycle. Students are afforded the opportunity to sample all Senior Cycle subjects in Transition Year before making subject choices.

A blended approach is taken towards teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Transition Year students will be tasked to work both individually, and as part of various groups to complete projects, assessments and participate in competitions specific to 4th year pupils. This varied approach will help students to develop a range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills.

Various domestic and foreign trips are also organised and offered to students as part of the Transition Year Programme. These trips include an overnight outdoor pursuits trip to Galway and a foreign ski-trip, both of which are highlights of the Transition Year Programme and frequently referenced by pupils throughout their time in Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ.

### Aims of the Transition Year Programme:

- To promote maturity and provide students with the opportunity to develop academically and socially
- To assist pupils in undertaking and dealing with new challenges
- To enable students to become more independent
- To encourage pupils to develop new academic and non-academic interests
- To expose pupils to working in new class groups
- To allow pupils to gain experience of the working world
- To allow pupils to develop a sense of social awareness
- To encourage students to contribute to society in a positive and socially responsible way
- To enable pupils to make informed decisions around their Senior Cycle subject choices

At the end of each year, the Transition Year Programme is assessed and evaluated by teachers, students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and school management. This process allows the programme to be reviewed and adapted on an annual basis to meet the needs of all stakeholders.



## Core Subjects

*The following subjects are undertaken throughout the entire Transition Year Programme:*

English  
Irish  
Maths  
French  
Career Guidance  
Religion  
Computer Studies  
Work Experience  
Physical Education  
Wellbeing



## Rotational Subjects

*The following subjects are sampled by pupils throughout the Transition Year Programme:* Biology

Biology  
Chemistry  
Physics  
Agricultural Science  
Art  
Home Economics  
Music  
Politics & Society  
History  
Geography  
Business  
Accounting  
Economics  
Design & Communication Graphics (DCG)  
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)



## Optional Transition Year Activities & Modules

BT Young Scientist & SciFest  
GAA Future Leaders  
Journalism  
Film Studies  
Environment Studies & The Green Schools Programme  
AIB Build-a-Bank  
Enterprise  
Young Social Innovators  
Debating  
Road Safety & Driver Theory Test Preparation  
Meditation Sessions  
First Aid  
Gaisce Awards







## Digital Learning

Here at Laurel Hill Secondary School we place huge value on technology and its role in facilitating teaching and learning. The use of technology in our school develops a wide range of critical skills in our students such as digital literacy, innovation and collaboration.

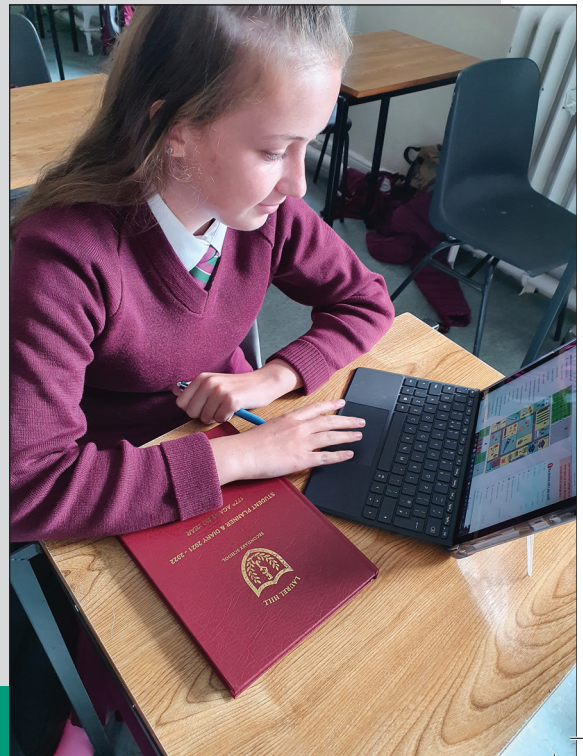
The online learning platform that we are using currently is Microsoft Teams. Learning online can be just as personal, engaging and socially connected as learning in a classroom. This platform allowed all our students to actively engage during the periods of online learning in 2020 and 2021 and we continue to use it to support students who may be absent from class, to set homework and to correct assignments, ensuring that students are always up to date with their schoolwork.

There are many different types of learners and Information Technology (I.T.) allows students to engage in new and exciting ways. Each student is given a Microsoft Office package which includes a dedicated school email address and access to all of the Microsoft Apps including Teams, Outlook, Word and PowerPoint.

Working with I.T. has never been more important than it is currently. We have seen how essential it is that our students are equipped with the digital competencies that are valued not only in school but also in the workplace. Students are given I.T. training during their Wellbeing classes in Junior Cycle and participate in the IACT training package in Transition Year to ensure that their knowledge and skills of I.T. are constantly developing.

The school has invested substantially in technology including upgrades to all the computers in each classroom, the enhancement of the Wi-Fi infrastructure and the purchase of new wireless projectors and visualisers to ensure that all types of learners are catered for. We have two dedicated PC suites and a fleet of iPads that are available for students to facilitate their portfolio work, Classroom Based Assessments and research.

We have also introduced student devices to our current 1st year cohort. Every 1st year student has a Microsoft Surface Go 2 and uses this to engage with their in-class learning, their eBooks and their research. This allows them to become independent workers with key I.T. skills that will stand to them throughout their school years and beyond.





## Music and Performing Arts

Here at Laurel Hill Secondary School F.C.J., we want you to join our Music Department to discover, develop and nurture your musical talent.

Music, song, drama and dance are an integral part of the cultural life of our school. Our fully equipped music room plays host to a variety of rehearsals every day of the week as there is always an upcoming event, competition, concert or musical production to prepare for. We are also extremely fortunate to have access to the school chapel within which the acoustics are unparalleled. Our annual Opening School Year Mass, Christmas Carol Service and Leaving Cert Graduation Mass offer our students a platform to showcase their musical talents in a liturgical setting.

All TY and 5th year students are encouraged to participate in the biennial school musical. Previous experience is not required and all students have the opportunity to find their niche whether it be on or off the stage. Auditions are held for the various dancing, singing, acting and orchestral roles. Months of rehearsal culminate in a week-long exhibition musical and dramatic talent.

If you love to sing as part of a large group then our choir is definitely the place for you! We compete regularly at competitions throughout the country and have various performance titles under our belts including the All Ireland Walton's Music for Schools Winners 2019 and the Briery Gap Light Entertainment Winners 2014. However if competing is not for you there will still always be a place for you in choir.

Irish traditional musicians meet regularly and take part in competitions also. We never forget our many talented Irish dancers and we include them in as many performances as possible. During Seachtain na Gaeilge musicians demonstrate their traditional playing and singing skills, performing their own arrangements of tunes.

Our school orchestra gives students an opportunity to use their instruments in a fun environment as we learn arrangements of popular songs, musicals and a variety of other musical genres. Our orchestra musicians often play as part of the live orchestra with professional musicians for our school musicals as well as performing at concerts and Masses throughout the year.









## Physical Education and Sport

Physical Education is an important aspect of the school curriculum as it promotes physical health, wellbeing and lifelong physical activity. It provides an outlet for students to develop skills and promote creativity and self-expression. It can help to build self-confidence and provides opportunities to set goals. Physical Education allows students to strengthen relationships with others and boosts academic learning.

Here, in Laurel Hill Secondary School F.C.J. we recognise Physical Education and Sport as integral to the holistic development of all our students. Our school has a huge variety of facilities including our large sports hall, hockey pitch, tennis courts and weights room. We offer a broad curriculum, at both junior and senior cycle where we cover all strands including aquatics, athletics, gymnastics, games, outdoor adventure and dance.

We encourage all students to participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. We offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities including camogie, Gaelic football, hockey, basketball, soccer and tag rugby. Students have also represented the school in golf, rowing, equestrian and athletics. Our school has a long tradition of sporting activity and achievement. Many of our past and present students have played at county level with Limerick and Clare in both camogie and football. Students have also gone on to play at interprovincial and national level in both hockey and rugby.

Students can also opt to study Leaving Cert Physical Education (LCPE). LCPE was introduced as a Leaving Cert subject in 2018 and we have been offering it here since 2020. This is a unique opportunity for students to understand, apply and analyse physical activity from different perspectives. The curriculum focuses on a broad range of components including, sport psychology, nutrition, skill acquisition, components of fitness among others.













## Pastoral Care

Here at Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ Limerick, the care of our students is of paramount importance. We endeavour to create a school community where all members feel a sense of belonging and are respected and valued. Our pastoral care system is all inclusive and recognises the importance of diversity and respect for the whole community. The Pastoral Care programme which we implement deals with a wide variety of issues including the transition from primary to second level school, code of behaviour, coping with exam pressures, bullying, peer influence, relationships, community, personal development, bereavement and separation.

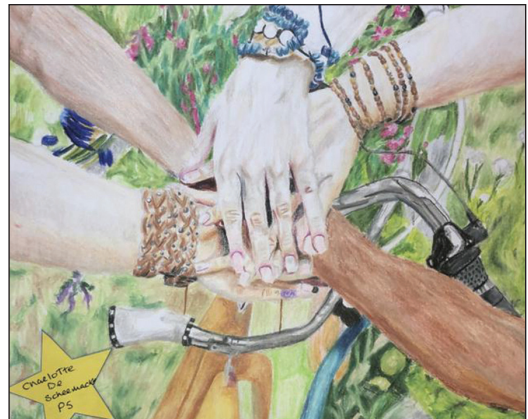


## Year Head & Class Teacher

Each year group has a designated Year Head and each class group within that year has a Class Teacher who has responsibility for the welfare of the students in their year/class group.

## Study Skills and Supervised Study

Supervised study is in place for students after school from Monday to Friday with Saturday and Sunday sessions provided where there is demand. Each year a study skills seminar is organised for all groups.



## Special Educational Needs Team/Learning Support

The SEN Co-ordinator and SEN team meet with individual students to assess their specific educational needs and put in place any additional supports for those students. This is carried out in consultation with their parents/guardians. Testing is carried out at various times during the school year to assist with learning needs and to develop suitable programmes of learning.

## Guidance and Counselling

The School Guidance Service has a pivotal role to play in our school. Our aim is to assist all students in their holistic development while providing educational, vocational and personal guidance. This is completed through the implementation of the School Guidance Programme by means of weekly classes, individual one-to-one meetings and group activities. The programme in place has been developed to suit the needs of our students as they progress through each stage of their educational journey. The Guidance Counsellor offers one-to-one support to students who want to discuss personal or vocational issues in a confidential, non-judgemental setting. This can be at the request of the student or by referral from a staff member or parent.



## Induction for First Year Students

Each year a programme is devised to enable first year students to make a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. This programme is implemented by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head and Class Teachers. It takes place over the first week of school.



## Companionship Award

This award is presented each year to the sixth year student who best exemplifies the FCJ charism of Companionship which is central to FCJ ethos and philosophy of education.

This award was first given in 2010 which coincided with the formation of the Le Chéile Catholic Schools' Trust. While Laurel Hill is part of this trust the Sisters wanted to leave something in their schools that would recognise and honour their charism. Thus the Companionship Award was initiated. Companionship seeks to create an atmosphere where all can find a place and feel valued. Respect for the individual is paramount and all are invited to use their gifts for the service of others, for friendship, for change, for growth and new life...and therefore this award is not about academic excellence, but rather focuses on the type of person that the student is.

One of the main aims of the Le Chéile Trust is to ensure that Catholic Education is available as an option for families who wish to ensure that their children receive a Christian Formation. It also aims to:

- Create a community spirit based on God's love.
- Have Christ as a model of human living and teaching
- Maintain links with the wider Christian Community.







**LAUREL HILL  
SECONDARY SCHOOL F.C.J.**

South Circular Road, Limerick, Ireland

Telephone +353 (0) 61 319383

Fax +353 (0) 61 316048

Email: [principal@laurelhillfcj.ie](mailto:principal@laurelhillfcj.ie)

**[www.laurelfcj.ie](http://www.laurelfcj.ie)**



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