St Paul's High School

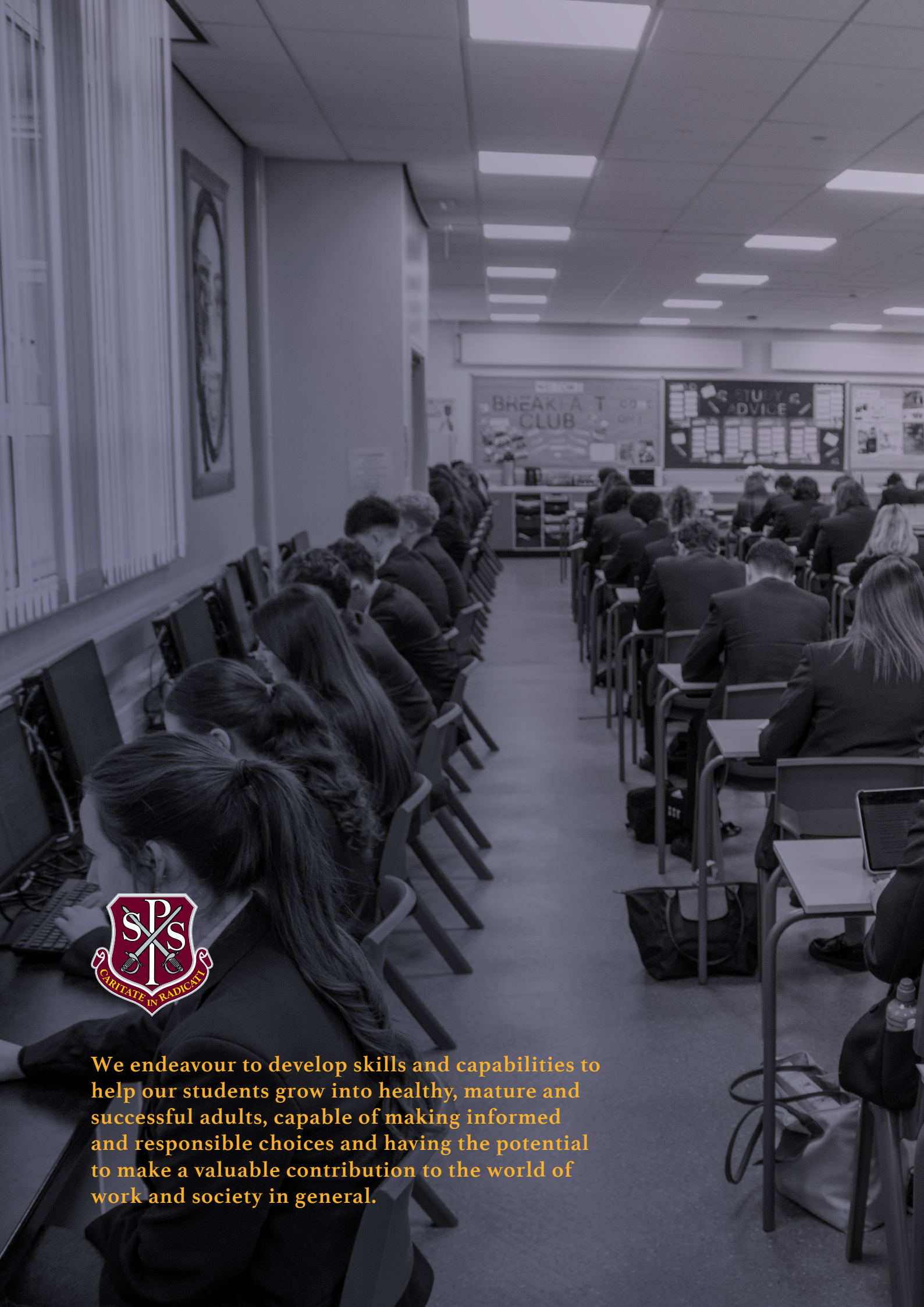
Ardscoil Naomh Pól

Welcome to St Paul's!

2026-2027



Quality education for all



We endeavour to develop skills and capabilities to help our students grow into healthy, mature and successful adults, capable of making informed and responsible choices and having the potential to make a valuable contribution to the world of work and society in general.



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Principal's Welcome

Dear new Year 8 pupil

I am delighted to welcome you as the newest pupil of St Paul's High School, Bessbrook.

It may be a couple more weeks before you become a full St Paul's pupil, but use this time to get to know the school, find out some more about our fantastic facilities, learn lots about the subjects you will study, and meet some of the key staff who will be there for you during Year 8.

I am confident that you will enjoy your time here and that you will have a sound preparation for your adult life. St Paul's is a very large school, but it is actually quite simple to find your way around. You should have no worries about getting lost as there will always be someone around to help you. You can ask any senior pupil or any member of staff and they will take you to where you want to go.

The best way to enjoy St Paul's is to make up your mind coming here that you will do the best you can. This means wearing your uniform with pride and always being neat and tidy, always behaving well at school, on the bus or at home, completing your homework on time and being respectful to your fellow pupils and all the staff.

St Paul's is delighted you have chosen to come here, and we want to give you the best we can offer. If you have any worries or concerns talk to your Form Teacher or Year Head or to Father Seamus, our Chaplain. You may wish to talk to the senior pupil who will be introduced to your class as a Year 8 mentor, or indeed come along and see myself. If there is something you don't want to tell us, then tell your parents at home and they will let us know. Most things are easy to sort out so it's important you share your worry with someone you trust and who will help you.

I want to wish you the very best for your time in St Paul's and I look forward to getting to know you and your parents in the years ahead.

Best wishes and enjoy the summer holidays.

Mr Dáithí Murray
Principal





Year Head Welcome

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and warmly welcome you as a new Year 8 pupil of St Paul's High School.

Starting post-primary school is an exciting new chapter, filled with opportunities to grow, make new friends, and experience things that will shape your time here. As your Year Head, one of my main priorities is to help you settle quickly, build strong friendships and encourage you to get fully involved in school life.

At St Paul's, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including sport, music, drama and various other opportunities, and I would strongly encourage you to take part. These opportunities are a fantastic way to meet new people, develop your talents, and create lasting memories beyond the classroom.

Some of you may feel a little nervous at the beginning, but please be assured that there is plenty of support available. You will soon settle in and feel part of our school community. Your Form Teacher will play an important role in guiding and supporting you, especially in those early days, whether you need help with your timetable, finding your way around, or simply adjusting to your new routine.

We really look forward to welcoming you to St Paul's in August. You are about to begin a journey that will offer you many exciting opportunities, including a wide variety of trips and experiences that will stay with you long after your school days are over.

St Paul's is a place where friendships are formed, talents are nurtured, and pupils are encouraged to be the very best version of themselves. I encourage you to embrace everything that is on offer, get involved, and take pride in being part of our school community.



Mr Martin Rafferty
Head of Year 8

School Uniform

GIRLS' SCHOOL UNIFORM
Maroon blazer
White shirt
Knee-length grey skirt (inverted pleats)
Tie
Maroon tights (Years 8 – 12)
Grey tights (Years 13 and 14)
Black leather shoes or navy 'boat shoes'
Navy doubled trimmed jumper (optional)

BOYS' SCHOOL UNIFORM
Maroon blazer
White shirt
Full-length black trousers
Tie
Dark coloured socks (Years 8 – 12)
Dark coloured socks (Years 13 and 14)
Black leather shoes
Grey double trimmed jumper (optional)



PE Uniform

GIRLS' PE UNIFORM
St Paul's GAA jersey (compulsory)
St Paul's GAA shorts (compulsory)
St Paul's black or navy leggings (compulsory)
St Paul's sports socks (compulsory)
St Paul's half zip OR St Paul's crew neck (one item of choice compulsory)
St Paul's jacket (optional)
Football boots (compulsory)
Navy doubled trimmed jumper (optional)

BOYS' PE UNIFORM
St Paul's GAA jersey (compulsory)
St Paul's GAA shorts (compulsory)
St Paul's 'skinny' pants (compulsory)
St Paul's sports socks (compulsory)
St Paul's half zip OR St Paul's crew neck (one item of choice compulsory)
St Paul's jacket (optional)
Football boots (compulsory)
Grey double trimmed jumper (optional)

Please note that PE uniform, as listed above, is compulsory for all pupils in Years 8 – 12. No other sports items are permitted.

Until further notice, pupils in Years 8 – 10 must wear their St Paul's PE Uniform on their timetabled PE day. No other items of clothing will be permitted.



Communication

Whilst your child is attending St Paul's communication will be via the St Paul's App. It is essential that you download and install the app on your phone to ensure that you stay up-to-date with all important communication from St Paul's.

St Paul's App (called 'Secondary365')



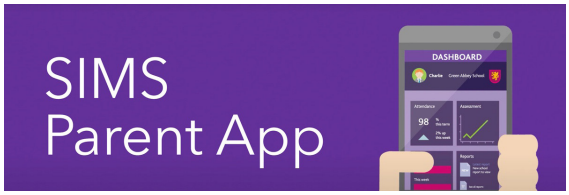
Apple App Store

Google Play Store

St Paul's uses an app called 'Secondary365' which is a free, commercial, educational tool used by many local schools. It is available to download for free from the Apple App Store and from the Google Play Store.

Attached two QR codes below which, when scanned, will bring you to the app in the relevant App Store.

Once you have downloaded and installed the app, you will be prompted to search for your child's school. By searching for, and selecting 'St Paul's High School, Bessbrook' you will then be able to access the app.



SIMS Parent App

Additionally, we use the 'SIMS Parent App' to update parents on their child's attendance, achievements, behaviour and to issue regular progress reports. Parents of pupils in Year 8 will receive separate information about downloading, installing and logging into this secure app early in September.

iPayimpact

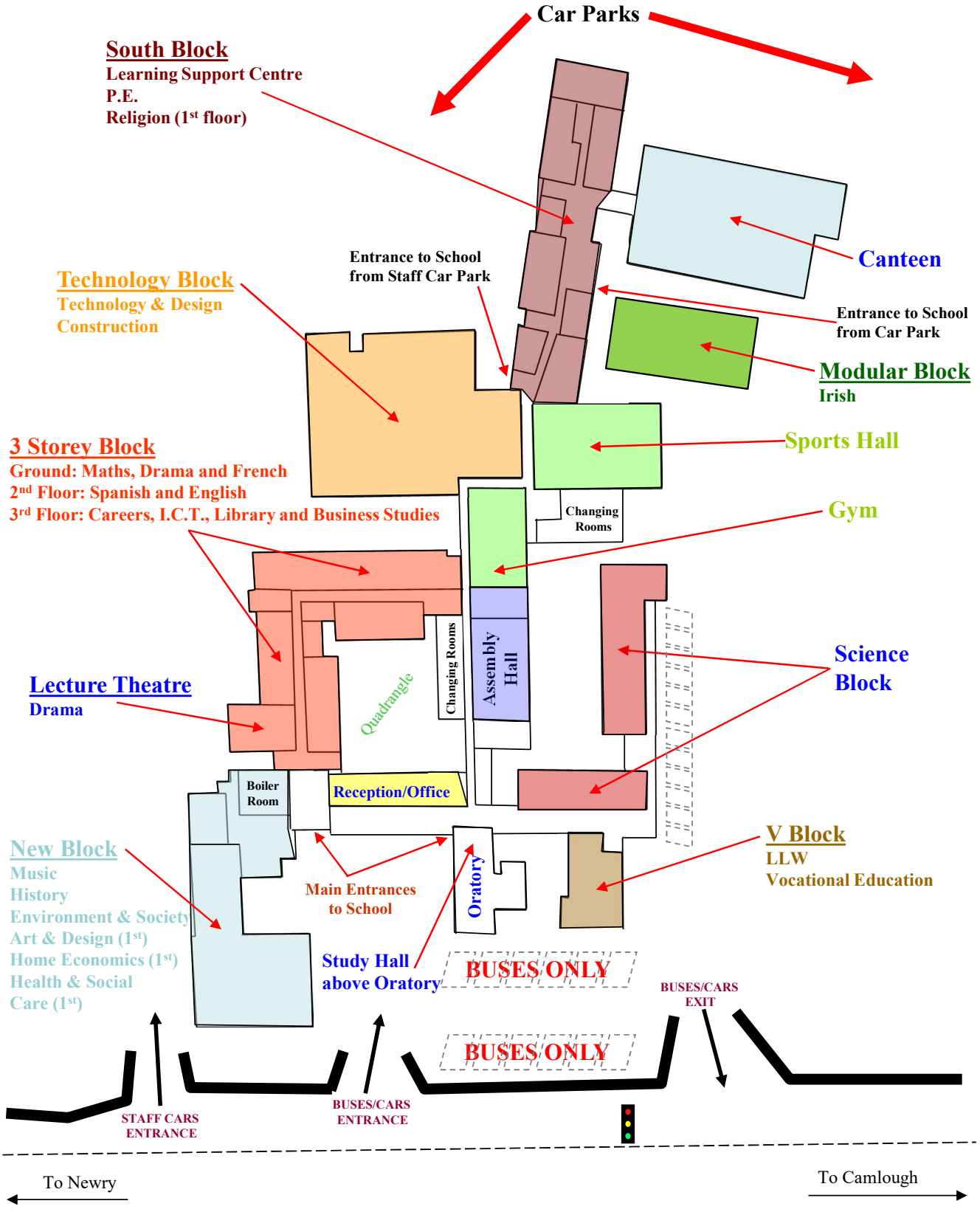
A simple and secure way for parents and guardians to pay for all school purchases, iPayimpact removes the need for pupils to bring cash and cheques into school, making school purchases completely cashless.

iPayimpact can be used to purchase school dinners, trips, events, tickets, and school shop, either through desktop, tablet, or a mobile phone, enabling you to review payments, purchase history and current balance anytime, anywhere.

iPayimpact



St Paul's High School, Bessbrook
School Layout



School Week Timetable Example

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1	He 033 HE2	Mu 092 MU1	Re 041 RE2	Ar 004 AR4	Lw 032 G6
2	He 033 HE2	Mu 092 MU1	En 027 F8	Ar 004 AR4	Hi 072 ES2
REG	Rg	Rg	Rg	Rg	Rg
3	En 027 F8	Ir 055 M4	Gg 011 ES6	Re 041 RE2	En 027 F8
4	En 027 F8	En 027 F8	Sp 094 F15	Ma 017 G6	Sp 094 F15
5	Lu	Lu	Lu	Lu	Lu
6	Sc 090 S10	Pe 080	Sc 090 S10	Ir 055 M4	Ma 017 G6
7	Sc 090 S10	Pe 080	Sc 090 S10	Lw 032 BS2	Gg 011 ES6
REG	Rg	Rg	Rg	Rg	Rg
8	Pd 044 G4	Sp 094 F15	Ma 017 G6	Tl 165 TL4	Re 041 RE2
9	Hi 072 ES2	Ma 017 G6	Ma 017 G6	Tl 165 TL4	Ir 055 M4

004 : Mr B G P MCARDLE
011 : Mr J MCELROY
017 : Mrs A CONLON
027 : Ms K L MCSHANE
032 : Miss C A MURRAY
033 : Mrs C BYRNE
041 : Mr T O MURNEY
044 : Mr N F MCSHERRY
055 : Mr S G QUINN
072 : Mr E P MCCAFFREY
080 : Miss G C BOYLAN
090 : Mrs L A TAYLOR
092 : Mr P M SLANE
094 : Miss L S MULHOLLAND
103 : Mr O J S FITZPATRICK
165 : Mr W F GEOGHEGAN

Extra Curricular Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Boys' Gaelic Football	Senior Boys' Football (Year 11/12/13/14)	U14 Boys' Football (Year 9 &10) & Year 8 Boys' Football (commencing later in year)	Senior Boys' Football	U14 Boys' Football (Year 9/10)	Senior Boys' Football
Girls' Gaelic Football	U16 Girls' Football U14 Girls' Football (commencing later in year)		Senior Girls' Football	U20 Girls' Football	U16 Girls' Football U14 Girls' Football (commencing later in year)
Camogie				Junior Camogie (Year 8/9/10)	
Hurling				Junior Hurling (Year 8/9/10)	
Netball		Junior Girls' Netball (Year 9/10) Year 8 Netball (lunchtime, commencing October)	Senior Girls' Netball (Year 11/12/13/14)	Year 8 Netball (lunchtime, commencing October)	
Athletics				Junior Athletics (Year 8/9/10)	
Soccer	Junior Boys' Soccer (Year 8/9/10)		U14 Girls' Soccer	U16 Girls' Soccer	
Dance		Lunchtime			
Girls' Junior Choir		Junior Girls' Choir (Year 8 & 9) (Period 5/Lunch)			
Boys' Junior Choir			Junior Boys' Choir (Year 8 & 9) (Period 5/Lunch)		
Mixed Choir				Senior Mixed Choir (Year 10–14)	
Senior Choir			Senior Girls' Choir (Year 10–14)		
Orchestra	All year groups (starting mid-October)				
African Drumming	Year 10 Drums Period 6/Lunch				Year 8 Drums Period 5/Lunch
Trad Group					All year groups After school
Drama		Junior Drama Club			
Boys' Basketball	Junior Boys' Basketball (Year 8/9/10)				

Year 8 Transition FAQs

PUNCTUALITY

What time should my child be in school each morning?

St Paul's Key Stage 3 Breakfast Club begins each morning at 8.20 a.m. Pupils are welcome to attend the Breakfast Club and access ICT facilities in the Senior Study Centre. First class begins at 9.00 a.m. To allow pupils to be ready for class before registration commences pupils should be inside the building **no later than 8.55 a.m.**

If my child is late to school, what should they do?

If your child arrives after 9 am but before 9:40 am they should proceed to their first period class where their class teacher should mark them as present and record how late they were. If your child arrives after 9:40am they should register their attendance at reception before proceeding to their next timetabled class. This information will be monitored by the school's pastoral team to identify latecomers and persistent tardy pupils.

My child has an appointment which they must attend before coming to school. Who should I inform about this?

We would strongly recommend that all appointments are made outside of school hours. However, if you are aware that your child will be late to school, please inform your child's form teacher, by writing a note in their student planner. This note should be shown to the form teacher prior to the appointment (e.g. the day before) allowing the form teacher to post a message on our computerised attendance system which will indicate that your child will be late to school. Pupils will only be permitted to be absent from school for exceptional circumstances.

If your child needs to leave school early during the school day, please forward a note to your child's form teacher in their student planner detailing the time you will require them to leave school (and indicate any return time if appropriate). Your child's form teacher will issue them with a release form which should be presented to Reception before they will be permitted to leave school. Please note, all pupils must be collected from Reception, or from school grounds. No pupils will be allowed to leave the school grounds during the day unless accompanied by a parent/guardian or appropriate adult.

ATTENDANCE

All pupils are expected to attend school every day. Pupil attendance is closely monitored, and persistent non-attenders are referred to the school's Educational Welfare Officer.

My child has missed a day (or a number of days) from school. What should I do?

On the morning of the first day of absence please contact the school office on (028) 3083 0309 and leave a message which will inform your child's form teacher of the reasons for their absence. Please indicate if you consider the absence will be longer than one day.

A note which explains the reason for your child's absence should be written in the student planner and shown to your child's form teacher on the day your child returns to school. This will allow the form teacher to update your child's record and provide an explanation for the absence.

There is a planned absence which I am aware of. What should I do?

Pupils will only be permitted to be absent from school for exceptional circumstances. If these circumstances exist, please forward a note to your child's form teacher in their student planner detailing the dates of the planned absence and the reason why. Your child's records will be updated accordingly.

My child has an appointment which occurs during the school day and will require them to leave school early. What should I do?

Pupils will only be permitted to be absent from school for exceptional circumstances. If your child needs to leave school early during the school day please forward a note to your child's form teacher in their student planner detailing the time you will require them to leave school (and indicate any return time if appropriate). Your child's form teacher will issue them with a release form which should be presented to Reception before they will be permitted to leave school. Please note, all pupils must be collected from Reception, or from school grounds. No pupils will be allowed to leave the school grounds during the day unless accompanied by a parent/guardian or appropriate adult.

We have booked a family holiday during school term. Is this permitted?

It is strongly advised that families refrain from during this, as outlined in our Pupil Attendance Policy. Your child will be marked as absent for this holiday and will miss out on essential learning and teaching.

HOMEWORK

How much homework should my child be getting?

There are no hard and fast rules about quantities of homework. However, you will find that there will be more English and Maths homeworks, due to the frequency of these subjects on your child's timetable. Also, be aware that homework may involve reading and/or research; it may not always be written. Please ensure that you check your child's planner each evening to ensure they have completed all set homework. Also, please sign your child's planner at the end of each week.

My child is having difficulty completing homeworks independently. What should I do?

Homework is designed to consolidate classroom learning and teaching and build on the child's knowledge. It is to be expected that your child may struggle at times. Please support them but resist the temptation to do the homework for your child. If there appears to be real difficulty, please contact the form teacher or class teacher to discuss. Furthermore, please bring up any of these concerns at the parent/teacher meetings.



Year 8 Transition FAQs

SOCIAL MEDIA

When used effectively, social media can be a wonderful way for your child to interact and learn with others in a positive way. However, we advise parents/guardians to strictly monitor their child's online behaviour.

My child is experiencing bullying-type behaviour by others on social media. What should I do?

St Paul's has a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of bullying-type behaviour. This is mirrored in our Anti Bullying Policy and everyday practice. You should report this concern to your child's Form Teacher/Year Head, who will look into the issue and offer support in seeking a resolution. However, please remember that it is very difficult for schools to police and monitor cyber bullying as it mostly occurs outside of school. Serious concerns should be reported to the PSNI.

My child is using social media to an excessive amount. What should I do?

We would advise that parents/guardians supervise their child's use of online technology. A general piece of advice we offer is that phones, tablets, iPads etc aren't brought to bed at night. This assists your child's healthy sleep routine and ensures they're ready for learning at school each day.

My Year 8 child wants to set up a social media account. Should I allow them?

Most social media policies require a user to be above the age of 13 before they are permitted to set up a social media account. We see this as sound advice.

How do I stay informed about current news and events at St Paul's?

We are a social media savvy school! We post on social media on a regular basis about school events, community events, safety messages and pupil achievements. Like us on Facebook or follow us on other platforms and our news will appear on your newsfeed.

Is my child permitted to bring a mobile phone / device to school?

A very important school rule in St Paul's is that pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 are not allowed to bring a mobile device into school.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

As you're already aware, we offer an extensive list of extra-curricular opportunities for your child to participate in.

My child is interested in getting involved in some of your sports clubs, how do they sign up?

Most of the trials for football, soccer, rugby, hurling, netball, cross country take place during PE classes during the first two weeks in September. Those selected are listed on the sports notice boards and training starts after school by the end of September.

My child is interested in getting involved in some of your music clubs, how do they sign up?

As with sports, the auditions for choir, orchestra, drums and traditional group will take place during class in the first two weeks in September. Those selected are listed on the music notice boards and practice starts during lunch and after school by the end of September.



My child received Education Authority music tuition in primary school. How can they continue with this in St Paul's?

We have a strong partnership with Education Authority tutors, who provide tuition and help prepare your child for grades in singing and in a wide range of instruments. You or your child can contact Miss McAvoy (Head of Music) and she will make arrangements and forward fee details to you. St Paul's covers half the costs of these fees; parents are required to pay the remaining balance.

SCHOOL TRIPS

What school trips is my Year 8 child able to go on?

Each year we have a Christmas Year 8 trip to the Panto in Dublin. During the last school week in June there is our annual trip to Emerald Park, which is always very enjoyable. Children who have an excellent behaviour record are able to go on these reward trips.

Other curriculum related trips throughout the year include the Environment and Society trip to Carrickfergus and the Gaeltacht for those who are interested in Irish.

What other trips are available beyond Year 8?

We provide lots of opportunities to travel, have fun and learn! We have the annual Year 9 Ski Trip and the end of Key Stage 3 / Year 10 Barcelona Trip.

During Key Stage 4, there are language, music, business trips to Spain, Germany, Italy and France.

During Key Stage 5, there are our International Projects programme, where pupils have the opportunity to participate in and travel to different charitable projects throughout the world.

BEHAVIOUR

I have noticed a change in my child's behaviour. They've become very withdrawn and moody. What should I do?

The obvious thing is to talk to your child to establish if everything is okay. If you feel they may require counselling, we have school counsellors each day in school. This is part of our safeguarding procedures. Mrs McMahon is our Head of Safeguarding and Designated Teacher for Child Protection and you may wish to discuss any issues with her.

You can contact your child's form teacher or year head, who can make a referral to counselling on your behalf.

I am concerned about some of the behaviour on the bus my child travels on. Who should I contact?

We have a great partnership with Translink and Education Authority buses. If you have concerns about bus behaviour please contact Mr McArdle, Health and Safety Coordinator, who will investigate your concerns.

Please be aware, that appropriate behaviour on buses is essential. Translink and Education Authority buses can prevent your child accessing their bus if behaviour is deemed unacceptable. It will then be your responsibility to arrange transport for your child.

My child has received a demerit. What does this mean?

At St Paul's we always encourage positive behaviour. However, pupils may be given demerits by teachers based on poor behaviour, non-completion of homework etc. A demerit is recorded on SIMS and indicates that your child is not meeting the required standards of the school.

Demerits are totalled and analysed at the end of every month by the Pastoral Team and sanctions are discussed. It is usually the case that if a child receives four plus demerits in any month that parents will be informed, and a parental meeting sought to discuss how to move forward.

My child has been put on Target Plan. What does this mean?

Target Plan procedures are outlined in our Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy. When a child is placed on Target Plan it indicates that behaviour is giving serious concern and requires daily monitoring.

Parents will be involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the Target Plan and will be required to sign it daily.

There are various stages in the Target Plan process and in serious instances pupils will be referred to external agencies for further intervention.



Year 8 Transition FAQs

CURRICULUM

Please note, all schools follow the NI Curriculum. Your child is being taught the exact same content as other children throughout N Ireland – regardless of what type of school they attend.

My child has E & S on their timetable. What does this mean?

This is an abbreviation for Environment and Society. Some pupils are taught this subject in Key Stage 3. E & S introduces pupils to the areas of learning associated with History and Geography.

My child has LLW in their timetable. What does this mean?

This is an abbreviation for Learning for Life and Work.

LLW is a general subject, which focuses on Personal Development, Education for Employability and Citizenship which aims to develop our young people's attitudes towards a range of topical issues within society today.

My child is reluctant to do PE. What should I do?

PE is a compulsory subject for all our pupils through to Year 12, with a double period (80 minutes) on their timetable each week.

If your child has a specific medical condition, then special consideration may be given. However, we have a very varied PE programme and would encourage all pupils to participate and get the physical and psychological benefits associated with sport.



BREAK/LUNCH

What should my child bring for break?

There is a ten-minute classroom break each day, mid-morning. We encourage healthy snacks at this time, such as a piece of fruit or yoghurt.

My child wants to bring a packed lunch. What are the arrangements for this?

Year 8 and 9 pupils share the same lunch period, and all take their lunch (packed or school meal) in our school canteen. We encourage healthy lunches.



Are energy drinks allowed in school?

There is a ban on all high energy drinks, because of the negative effects on physical health and concentration levels. If your child is found to have Boost, Lucozade, or other high energy drinks in their possession, they will be confiscated.

Water or dilutable juice is recommended for all pupils.

Is my child allowed to go to the shop during school time?

Pupils are not permitted to leave school grounds at any stage during the school day. Pupils who breach this rule will be placed on detention. The only pupils allowed to the shop are those in Year 13 and 14.

UNIFORM

Is there a school jumper as part of the uniform?

The school is well heated and most of our pupils travel in cars and buses to school. We have a navy jumper for girls and a grey one for boys. These are available in any of the uniform outlets.

What sort of school footwear is permitted?

Runners, Converse or similar type shoes are not acceptable school footwear. Black– or navy–coloured shoes are essential. 'Boat' style shoes for girls are permitted.

Is my daughter allowed to wear tights?

Maroon coloured tights are required all year round.

What does my child wear to PE?

St Paul's has a PE uniform, and ALL pupils must wear this on their PE days. No other items are permitted. The PE uniform is available at O'Neill's and McKeever's Sports shops.

What other items does my child require for PE?

All boys and girls will require runners and football boots on PE days.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Please note, all of our policies and procedures are continuously being reviewed to update practices. These can be accessed via our school website stpaulsbessbrook.org.

SAFEGUARDING

In line with Education Authority regulations we have a strong team of trained individuals in place to deal with any safeguarding issues which may arise. (Outlined on the next page.)



St Paul's High School Safeguarding Team



Ms Christine Fearon
Vice-Principal
Designated Teacher for Child Protection



Mrs Mary McMahon
Vice-Principal
Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection



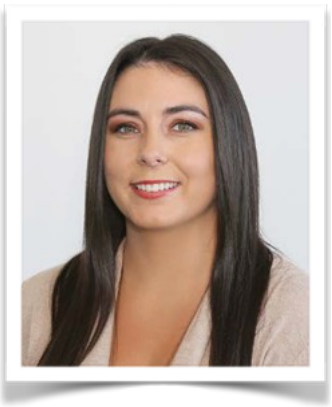
Mr Dáithí Murray

Principal



Mrs Eileen Fearon

Chair of Governors



Mrs Jenny Magee

Designated Governor for Safeguarding

If you hear or see something that concerns you, please speak to a member of our Safeguarding Team.

You can ask at Reception to speak to one of our Safeguarding Team or phone St Paul's on 028 3083 0309.

Prayer to St Paul

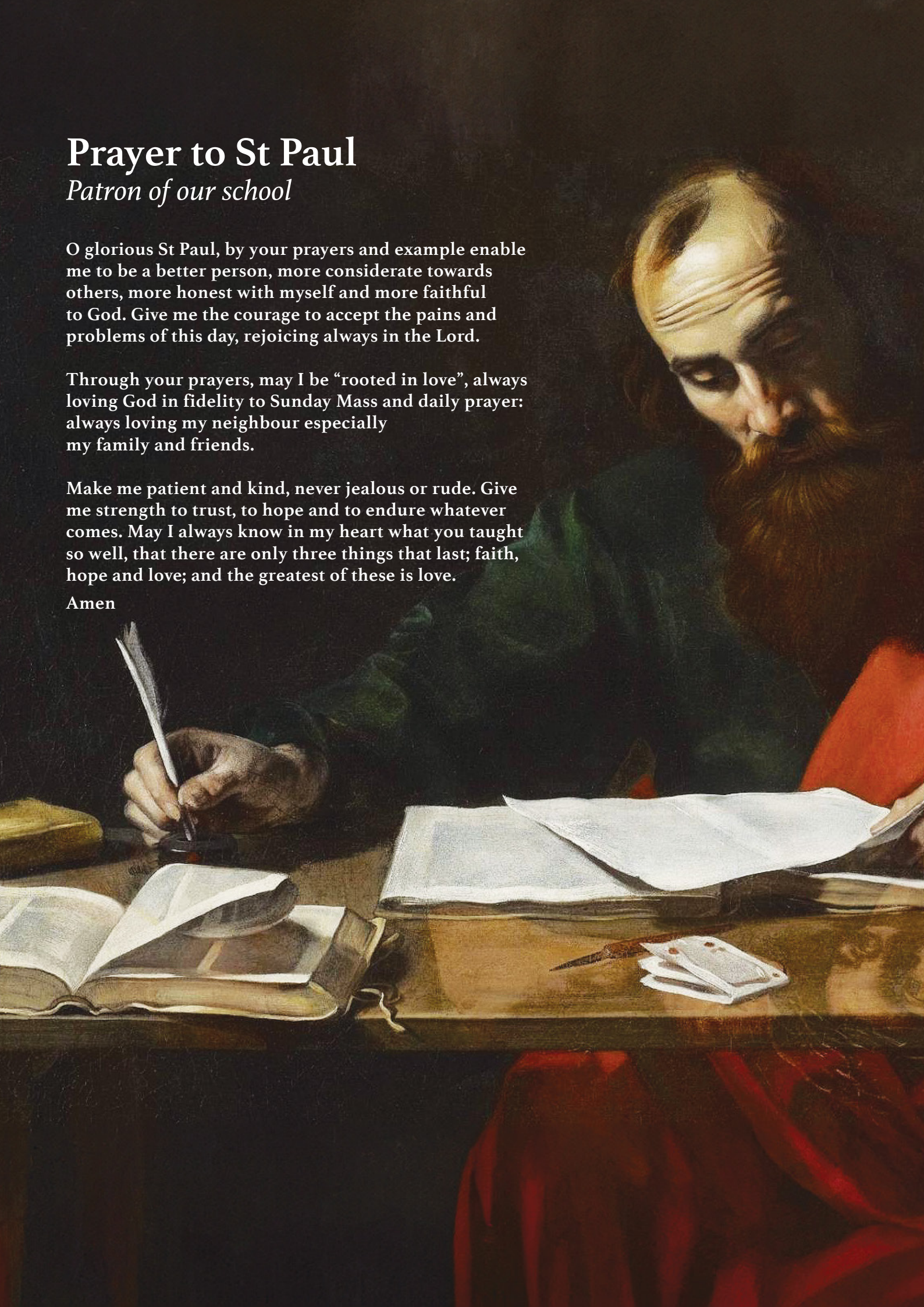
Patron of our school

O glorious St Paul, by your prayers and example enable me to be a better person, more considerate towards others, more honest with myself and more faithful to God. Give me the courage to accept the pains and problems of this day, rejoicing always in the Lord.

Through your prayers, may I be "rooted in love", always loving God in fidelity to Sunday Mass and daily prayer: always loving my neighbour especially my family and friends.

Make me patient and kind, never jealous or rude. Give me strength to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. May I always know in my heart what you taught so well, that there are only three things that last; faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

Amen





St Paul's High School

Ardscoil Naomh Pól

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