



**Holy Family Secondary School**  
**Our Diamond Jubilee Year: Celebrating 60 years of excellence in education**  
**1959-2019**

*'Monday, 7 September 1959, is a landmark date in the history of education in Newbridge. On that day the town's first secondary school for girls opened its doors. As it happened, they were old, familiar doors- the same which had welcomed the first pupils of the Holy Family Sisters almost one hundred years earlier...A new phase of educational endeavour and achievement, under the guidance of the daughters of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, had begun...The secondary school for girls was a major educational legacy from the Holy Family Sisters to the people of Newbridge'*

*Source: Mrs Máire Ryan, the Holy Family Sisters in Newbridge; 1875-2000*

There was no secondary education available for girls in Newbridge until 1948 when the 'Secondary Top' began the preparation of its first six pupils for their Intermediate Certificate Examination. At that time, 'secondary tops' catered for pupils in national schools who were between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The secondary tops offered these pupils a secondary programme of instruction. In Newbridge, the obvious need for a secondary school grew organically from the success of the 'Holy Family Secondary Top', from the increasing population of the town and the consequent increase in pupil numbers.

Mean-scoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa (Holy Family Secondary School) began in 1959 with an enrolment of seventy-five pupils and a staff of five, including the above-quoted Mrs Maire Ryan (who later became the first lay Vice-Principal) and its first Principal, Sr. Catherine Moran. The school was accorded provisional recognition by the Department of Education on 19 January 1959. The identity of the new school was fostered by the adoption of a school anthem, which took its title from the motto on the Holy Family crest: *Soli Deo Gloria*. From its foundation, a close-knit, family atmosphere became a defining characteristic of the school, and throughout the school's subsequent growth and development, this esprit de corps has always been carefully fostered in a holistic approach to education and school-life.

In 1967, a new building was erected to cater for 240 pupils. This building was only partly financed by the Department of Education. Great credit is due to the Holy Family Sisters and the pupils and parents of Newbridge who had to fundraise the balance of the cost, a considerable sum of money at that time. By 1976, enrolment figures had reached 387. Once again, prefabs were needed to alleviate overcrowding. In 1982, a new extension was opened, a bright, spacious building which included a much-needed dining room, a library, a large Art room, a Physics laboratory and a demonstration room. Numbers rose rapidly to 742 in 1992 and, with such a large student body, it soon became obvious that extra science labs, a well-equipped gymnasium and extra classrooms were necessary. The latest extension was officially opened in 2003.

The impressive multi-media room, technology room, science laboratory, computer rooms and full size P.E. hall have enabled Holy Family Secondary School students to avail of the latest developments in the teaching and learning of Languages, Technology, Sciences, I.T. and P.E. In response to a changing world and, in an effort to meet pupils' needs, the school continually seeks to develop and improve school programmes. The school's curriculum has indeed changed greatly over the past fifty years. There are currently 714 members of our student body. The Junior Cycle, Transition Year Programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving certificate Programme are on offer to enhance the students' educational experience.

Yet, academic subject options and curricular innovations on their own offer but a limited insight into the important work of education that goes on inside the school. The extra-curricular activities, programmes and events that have, since 1959, captured the essence of the school and the imagination of the students are proudly continued today. The Junior Cycle began to replace the Junior Certificate in 2015 and the importance of *student voice* and *wellbeing* education is central to our programmes development and planning. The holistic development of each HFSS student is key to our Mission Statement and

underpins all that we aim to do. Our school chaplaincy work, our special education needs provision and our school guidance and counselling work is all planned with the school's characteristic spirit in mind.

Apart from its place in the formal curriculum, music has always played an important extra-curricular role in Holy Family Secondary School. Junior and Senior choirs and orchestras have flourished long and harmoniously. The school's fine dramatic and musical tradition, established in 1969 by Lt. Col. Con O'Sullivan with *The Quaker Girl*, has since been championed by talented teams of teachers. The show's purpose has always been to provide an enjoyable and memorable learning experience for all. We share the musical theatre tradition with our 'brothers across the road', the Patrician Secondary School. Our two schools collaborate and alternate years for creating the school musical. The junior and senior choirs have flourished and our school choirs lend their melodic voices to our important school events, whilst also participating in national and international festivals and competitions. Our art education programmes aim to develop imagination, creativity independence and resourcefulness in our students in the areas of art, craft, design and the history and appreciation of art.

The school has a proud tradition of Irish, Spanish, French and German debating. Extra-curricular activities have taken on an international flavour with exchange programmes to international destinations. The school also continues its excellent tradition of sporting achievements with many proud success stories and with a diversity of sports available to students. Gaelic football, volleyball, badminton and basketball may have usurped hockey and rounders but the ever-changing and fresh approach of teachers and students ensures that a healthy sports tradition survives. Our students continue to compete to the highest national standards and our volleyball and basketball teams have won many National Championship titles in recent years.

Since 1959, the greater school and local community have admirably supported students and staff. The inaugural meeting of the Holy Family Parents Association was held in 1977 and, ever since, parents have made a tremendous contribution to the school, providing support, essential fundraising and encouragement in all matters, which are of benefit to the pupils. Past pupils and the many members of Board of Managements have also provided excellent support.

It is a great privilege to be Principal as we celebrate the school's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We have inherited a rich culture and tradition of education from the Holy Family Sisters who founded the school. It is an honour to work alongside a dedicated team of Deputy Principals, teachers and staff who all work tirelessly to continue to maintain our school's high standards for our student body. We are hugely supported by the Board of Management in our education endeavours. We all strive to uphold our school's core ethos and shared goal; To Be Family and To Build Family.

### **Mrs Sarah Allen, Principal, September 2019**

To recognise our significant diamond jubilee milestone, our school community will celebrate with the following events (amongst others to be announced as the year unfolds);

<b>Mon, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019</b>	<b>School day - Start of School Year Mass for school community, Celebrant Bishop Denis Nulty</b>
<b>Tues 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019</b>	<b>11am- 1pm - Visit of President Michael D. Higgins to meet with our student body</b>
<b>Fri, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2019</b>	<b>7.30pm -Celebration Mass for Past Pupils and Past Staff, celebrant Bishop Denis Nulty</b>
<b>Wed, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019</b>	<b>An Evening of Music &amp; Song to celebrate the HFSS Diamond Jubilee (Ticketed event, The Keadeen Hotel at 7.30pm)</b>

*'The school, though once described by a visiting inspector as a 'gentle school', was also a strong school. It had within it the capacity to adapt to new and revolutionary changes in the field of education...I trust the Holy Family Secondary School will always have within it the resilience and ability to adapt perspectives while never abandoning the sound principles which have defined the ethos of the school and which, over the years, have helped it to meet with courage the challenges of a changing world'*

Sr. Catherine Moran, foreword; Maire Ryan's book, *The Holy Family Sisters in Newbridge; 1875-2000*

Further reference : [www.holyfamily.ie](http://www.holyfamily.ie)