

First Year Subjects - what's involved?

Junior Cycle in St. Louis Community School



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The new Junior Cycle in St. Louis Community School

This booklet is designed to inform incoming students and parents about the new Junior Cycle which is now fully in place in St. Louis Community School. The Junior Cycle replaces the old Junior Cert, with a much greater emphasis on new ways of learning and on developing a broader range of skills.

In St. Louis Community School, your child will have access to a varied curriculum of knowledge, understandings, skills and values. Eight principles underpin the framework for Junior Cycle. These inform the planning for, as well as the development and implementation of, junior cycle programmes in the school. The eight principles are: Learning to Learn; Choice and Flexibility; Quality; Creativity and Innovation; Engagement and Participation; Continuity and Development; Inclusive Education; Wellbeing.

Each subject has its own specification replacing what was previously known as a syllabus. Each specification describes the learning that takes place as part of the student's study of a subject in junior cycle. The specifications are available to download from the NCCA website. <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/>

The state examination that students sit in their subject at the end of their Junior Cycle will also be graded differently. Instead of A, B, C, D, E, F and NG the following descriptors will now be used:

Distinction:	90 to 100%
Higher Merit:	75 to 89%
Merit:	55 to 74%
Achieved:	40 to 54%
Partially Achieved:	20 to 39%
(Not Graded)	0 to 19%

Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning and skills in ways not possible in a pen and paper examination, for example, their verbal communication and investigation skills. CBAs will be undertaken in each subject and will be facilitated by the classroom teacher.

CBAs are undertaken during a defined period within normal class time. Students in St. Louis complete CBA 1 in 2nd Year and CBA 2 in 3rd Year. CBAs are awarded one of the following descriptors:

- Exceptional
- Above Expectations
- In Line with Expectations
- Yet to Meet Expectations

Once the CBA 2 is completed in 3rd Year, students complete a written Assessment Task which accounts for 10% of their overall mark for the final exam.

Student Wellbeing

Your child's wellbeing is of central importance to his/her educational success and overall happiness. Wellbeing is a core part of your child's junior cycle experience in

St. Louis. This area of learning includes Physical Education (PE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Religious Education and Guidance.

In the following pages you will read more about what's involved in each subject on offer to First Years in St. Louis Community School.

English:

The English Department in St Louis aims to engender a love of language across a wide range of genres. A variety of oral language, written and reading experiences are offered to students. Our aim is to develop each student's confidence in having an appreciation of language styles and literature genre. Our approach follows the Junior Cycle guidelines in relation to the achievement of meaningful learning outcomes for our students.

Continuous Assessment: Students complete two Classroom Based Assessments in English. CBA is an oral communication assessment. Students are given an opportunity to choose a topic or issue that is of interest or importance to them and to prepare a presentation on that topic.

CBA 2 involves a Collection of Student's Texts. This CBA offers students a chance to celebrate their achievements as creators of texts by compiling a collection of their best writing in a variety of genres over time.

Final Exam:

Students complete a formal written Assessment Task to be submitted to the State Examinations Commission for marking along with the Final Assessment for English. This assessment task is in conjunction with CBA 2: Collection of Student's Texts. The Assessment Task is worth 10% of the final grade.

The final assessment worth 90% will be offered at Higher and Ordinary Levels. At both levels there will be one 2-hour examination paper, which is designed to assess the extent to which candidates have engaged with the learning outcomes of the course.

Gaeilge:

Overview: Students studying Irish in St. Louis can look both at their historical and contemporary culture and identity, and therefore gain an appreciation of the importance of assuming personal ownership of the language. Junior Cycle Irish builds upon the language developed during primary education. Student's vocabulary is both reinforced and enriched at this stage and the language skills (listening, speaking, reading, spoken interaction and writing) are further developed.

Students will be given opportunities to sample a selection of literature to support their learning over the three years of junior cycle.

Assessment: The CBAs allow students to demonstrate their language, communicative, and interactive abilities in ways not possible in a formal examination. The assessments will be closely related to the day-to-day work in the classroom.

There will be an Assessment Task to complete after the second CBA, it is awarded 10% of the final grade. This Assessment Task will be sent to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for marking along with the final examination.

Final Exam: The final examination will be set by the State Examinations Commission at two levels: Ordinary and Higher. This two hour exam will be held at the end of third year.

Maths:

Overview: Junior Cycle Mathematics focuses on improving students' mathematical experience in the classroom and on developing skills for life, work and further study through the five inter-connected strands: Statistics and probability, Geometry and trigonometry, Number, Algebra and Functions.

Students experience learning outcomes through rich problem-solving tasks and engaging learning experiences. The specification stresses that the learning outcomes are for three years and therefore the learning outcomes focused on at a point in time will not have been 'completed' but will continue to support students' learning of mathematics up to the end of junior cycle.

Continuous Assessment: Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) are completed during normal class time. They will closely resemble what happens daily in the classroom. CBA's aim to create opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in areas that are difficult to capture in a timed pen and paper exam. The first CBA takes place in second year when students will engage in a mathematical investigation using the problem-solving cycle. The second CBA takes place in third year when students will engage in a statistical investigation using the statistical enquiry cycle.

We have a great team of Maths teachers who celebrate mathematical learning, through the participation in enrichment and support programmes. We look forward to you joining us as we embrace problem solving and the world of Maths.

Home Economics:

Overview: The central focus of Home Economics in St. Louis is achieving optimal, healthy and sustainable living for individuals, families and society. Home Economics empowers our students and their families with the knowledge and skills to address the real-life concerns of everyday living. Home Economics strives to solve everyday challenges using a blend of knowledge and skills and develops students' essential life skills and personal independence.

Continuous assessment: For CBA 1 students are asked to apply the design brief process to make/recycle a textile item for the individual or the home giving due regard to basic human needs, consumer trends, ecological issues and technology.

CBA 2 offers students the opportunity to demonstrate their culinary and creative food literacy skills and nutritional knowledge in the researching, analysing and planning of a food literacy skill brief for everyday living.

Final Exam: The final examination will consist of a practical food skills examination and a written examination. The practical examination and the written examination will each be allocated 50% of the marks available.

Modern Foreign Languages – French & Spanish:

Overview: There are many benefits of studying French or Spanish in St. Louis Community School. Language learning develops students' ability to analyse how language works, to compare languages, and to reflect on how they learn languages. Also, students who study French or Spanish, are able to access new worlds and different ways of thinking. By reflecting on other cultures and making comparisons students develop a deeper understanding of their own culture, while appreciating diversity.

Over the three years of junior cycle, students will have many opportunities to enjoy and learn their chosen target language. They will engage in language activities and tasks such as communicating in French or Spanish; listening, reading, speaking and writing; while gaining insights into the French or Spanish culture/s.

Continuous assessment: CBA 1 involves an oral communication activity where students may use any one of the following formats: interview, role-play, presentation or conversation in response. CBA 2 focuses on the students' language portfolio which they develop over the three years of junior cycle.

Final Exam: Students complete an Assessment Task in 3rd Year which is worth 10%. Students will sit this written examination paper of up to two hours duration at the end of the third year, 35% of their final mark is based on a listening exercise.

Art (Visual Art):

Overview: Over the three years of Junior Cycle students develop their knowledge, understanding, values and skills in Visual Art. They learn how to plan and create artworks over the three strands of Art, Craft and Design. Through this process, they develop their creativity and very valuable life skills of critical evaluation, problem solving, lateral thinking, organisation and self-reflection.

Students are always actively engaged. They develop creativity across a broad range of 2D and 3D areas which include drawing, painting, mixed media, graphic design, fashion design, print making, textiles, mask making, clay modelling, cartoons and more.

Looking at Art and understanding Visual Culture is an important part of the learning, and students visit Art exhibitions and galleries to explore the work of other artists from a historical and contemporary viewpoint.

Continuous Assessment: Art for Junior Cert is 100% practical which is great. First Year is about developing skills in the various Art elements.

Work is assessed continuously. In 2nd Year students undertake CBA 1, where they plan and execute an art work in one of the areas of Art, Craft and Design.

In 3rd year, students undertake a CBA 2, where students start planning from themes which lead into their Final project. The Final project involves planning and executing two artworks from the strands of Art, Craft and Design. This is completed in class time and marked by the State Exams. There is no written exam.

History:

Overview: Junior Cycle History in St Louis Community School aims to enable students to appreciate and understand the past by exploring major events and the lives of people in various eras. Students also come to see the world, and their place in it, from a historical perspective; and understand how the people and events of the past have shaped us. While studying History, we focus on exploring cultural inheritance, gaining historical empathy, discussing contentious issues, and encouraging critical thinking when interrogating sources. The course itself covers a broad spectrum of interesting topics from ancient civilisations to 20th Century Ireland and the world. There are special studies on both the Great Famine and the Holocaust, which our students have responded well to.

Continuous Assessment: CBA 1 is called "The past in my place". This is a great opportunity for students to undertake research into their own family or locality. It is a structured, evidence-based enquiry and students can use various ways to gain knowledge such as local/ national archives, interviews, visiting local museums and libraries etc.

CBA 2 is called "A Life in Time". This is a structured, evidence-based enquiry into the historical life and experiences of a person of interest to the student.

Final Exam: A common level, 2-hour written examination paper, which is designed to assess the extent to which students have engaged with the learning outcomes of the course.

Geography:

Geography in St. Louis Community School aims to empower our students with knowledge of the Earth, its landscapes, people, places and environment.

Why study Geography?

As Ireland is part of the global community working towards sustainable development goals, a roadmap to ending poverty, dealing with important issues such as inequality, migration, and protection of the environment; it is important that our young people are equipped with the knowledge to help achieve all of this.

Also, throughout this interesting 3-year course a wide range of geographical topics are studied including Climate Change, Biodiversity, as well as skills such as Map reading and Aerial Photo analysis.

Assessment:

There are two Classroom Based Assessments. The first takes place in 2nd Year and is entitled "Geography in the News". The 2nd Classroom Based Assessment takes place in 3rd Year and it comprises of a structured enquiry into Geographical aspects in your local area. A specified written Assessment Task will be completed after CBA 2. This is worth 10% of the final grade. A common level examination will take place in June of 3rd Year and is worth 90% of the final grade. The exam will be no longer than 2 hours.

Science:

Overview: Science in junior cycle aims to develop students' evidence-based understanding of the natural world. Science is in the everyday things, in the world around us, both living and non-living. Studying science in St Louis will help students understand the importance of science in our lives and in society.

In St Louis we aim to develop a sense of enjoyment in the learning of science leading to a lifelong interest in science. Practical work is at the core of this subject which covers a wide range of topics in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Earth & Space. Completion of the JC Science course provides access to the LC subjects of Physics, Chemistry, Agricultural Science and Biology.

Continuous assessment: For CBA 1 students are asked to complete a practical, experiment-based investigation into a topic of their choice

CBA 2 offers students the opportunity to demonstrate their communication skills, evaluation skills and scientific knowledge in researching a topic of their choice in completing a Science in Society brief.

Final Exam: The final examination will consist of an assessment task based on CBA2 and a written examination. The assessment task is allocated 10% of the marks available and the written examination allocated 90% of the marks available.

Business Studies:

Overview: Business Studies aims to stimulate students' interest in the business environment and how they interact with it. It develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that allow them to make informed and responsible decisions with all the resources available to them, ensuring their and society's well-being, while becoming more self-aware as learners.

At St. Louis we focus on improving students' understanding of the business environment and on developing skills for life, work and further study through the three inter-connected strands: Personal Finance, Enterprise and Our Economy.

Continuous Assessment: CBA 1 is a team-based project on one of three options: 1. Enterprise in Action, 2. Economics in Action, 3. Finance in Action

Over the course of 3 weeks, students engage in 3 areas of activity, which contribute to the generation of their evidence of learning and achievement, such as conducting research, analysing & evaluation of research findings and compilation of an individual report.

CBA 2 is an Individual Presentation. The chosen topic may be directly related to specific course content or the student may decide to study an issue of personal or local relevance, provided it is related to the business environment.

Final Exam: The final exam is set at common level. It comprises of a 2-hour written examination paper which is designed to assess the extent to which students have achieved the objectives of the specification as determined by the learning outcomes.

Music:

Overview: Music in St. Louis offers students opportunities to develop new skills, while drawing on their previous experiences. We provide an environment for students where they are safe to explore, experiment and be allowed to take creative risks. Music can engage students in learning that inspires, challenges, provokes, exhilarates, and liberates. Students are encouraged to collaborate in the formation of ideas and the presentation of these ideas and to critically reflect on their work and the work of others.

Continuous Assessment: CBA 1 offers students an opportunity to celebrate their achievements as creators of music, by compiling a collection of their musical ideas and creative expressions in a variety of genres and styles over time. Two pieces from the portfolio of compositions will be selected by the student for assessment purposes.

For CBA 2, students prepare a programme note to inform an audience on the content of their upcoming performance which itself will comprise the practical examination.

Final Examination: The final examination will consist of a practical examination and a written examination. The practical examination will be allocated 30% of the marks available. The written examination will be allocated 70% of the marks available.

Engineering:

Overview: Junior Cycle Engineering provides an introduction to materials and aims to develop the students' awareness of engineering processes while developing the necessary subject knowledge with the skills to engineer products. Engineering in St. Louis offers experiences of learning that are engaging and enjoyable for our students with a focus on problem solving for the manufacture of products with emphasis on efficiency, accuracy, precision and a high-quality finish.

This is achieved through three inter-connected strands: Processes and principles, Design applications and Mechatronics.

Assessment: Over the three years the students are assessed by completing two CBA's, a Department of Education prescribed Project (70%) and a common level 90-minute written theory paper (30%).

Graphics:

Overview: Graphics in St. Louis involves students in the development of a range of skills associated with the management of spatial problems and the graphical communication of ideas and solutions. Students use technical drawing equipment to solve drawing based questions. They create sketches to help problem solve and present designs. Computer drawing is also carried out where students create 3 dimensional drawings using computer software.

Continuous assessment:

CBA1: This Classroom-Based Assessment will provide students with the opportunity to develop their skills to become competent in communicating through sketching.

CBA 2: Through this CBA, students research and investigate the domain in which the project is situated and present their findings graphically through any appropriate graphical media. This enables them to develop the concepts for their final project in a real-life context prior to starting their work on the project. This is to be completed in third year.

A project will be completed within a four-week window in term two of third year its worth 30% of overall mark. A topic will be specified and students will be required to carry out research, create sketches and computer drawings as part of it.

Final Exam: This consists of a two-hour examination set and marked by the State Examinations Commission. Questions will require problem solving of students to answer drawing-based question.

Wood Technology

Overview: The study of Wood Technology at junior cycle in St. Louis aims to:

- enable students to develop the necessary conceptual understanding, disciplinary skills and subject knowledge to design and create artefacts of value
- empower students through designing and making, whilst developing an awareness of sustainability and the use of natural resources
- develop a range of core design skills and relevant manipulation skills through modelling and processing wood and other materials
- develop the confidence and resilience of students through engagement with the uncertainty of design challenges
- encourage students' innovation and creativity through recognition and appreciation of their capacity to design and create.

Continuous assessment:

For CBA 1 the topic is Wood Science in our Environment. It consists of investigation and presentation on a wood science related topic Responses may be presented in a wide range of formats. Students can collaborate, but each student must present an individual piece of work. It is carried out during a maximum of 3 weeks in 2nd year with support/guidance from teacher.

CBA 2 consists of student self-analysis and evaluation. It involves an individual analysis of their own skills. Response may be presented in a wide range of formats. It is carried out during a maximum of 3 weeks in 3rd year, with support/guidance from teacher.

Project: A project is completed in 3rd Year which involves students manufacturing a project and creating a portfolio. This is worth 70% of overall grade.

Final Exam: This is set and marked by State Examinations Commission. It involves answering wood and design related questions through written answers, drawings and sketches. This is worth 30% of overall grade.

Applied Technology:

Junior Cycle Applied Technology aims to develop the students' curiosity of the technological world while integrating the necessary subject knowledge with the disciplinary skills to investigate and solve real-life problems.

What is Applied Technology?

Applied Technology addresses the modifications of the natural world made to fulfil human needs or desires. This subject offers students a lens through which to view the role and impact of technology within their classroom, their community and the world.

Every human-made product is designed by applying some knowledge of the natural world and is built using materials derived from the natural world, even when the materials are not themselves natural. New technologies can impact on society and the environment. Students in St. Louis analyse expected benefits and impacts as they make decisions about their design solutions, while considering the end user, the environmental impact and the functionality of their designs.

Assessment:

In CBA 1, exploring the application of controlled systems in a local context provides opportunities for students to engage in practical, authentic learning experiences that

gives them the opportunity to investigate the role of controlled systems in a local setting.

In CBA 2, student self-analysis and evaluation provide opportunities for students to conduct an analysis of their coursework and skills to date in Applied Technology. Students focus their analysis and evaluation on a range of tasks or on a specific task.

Project:

On completion of the CBA 2, students undertake a project. This is worth 70% of the student's grade.

Final Examination:

Students will undertake a written examination of 90 minutes' duration. This is worth 30% of the student's grade.