Our Lady’s Bower aims to provide an education which is firmly Christian.

Within this caring community we endeavour to develop the spiritual, intellectual, artistic, moral and social capacity of all our students.

The school motto “Each for all and all for God” is the framework within which everyday life at our school is lived.

Our school excels in the personal development of its students in academic studies, sports and the Arts. Our Lady’s Bower places firm emphasis on high scholastic achievement, yet equal provision is given to personal development and self discipline. We endeavour to inculcate a sense of self-worth which provides the basis for personal fulfilment in work and in life.

“Aims”

Mr Noel Casey  
Principal

Ms Anne Beades  
Deputy Principal
Our Lady’s Bower is a voluntary secondary school situated on Retreat Road in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The school was established in 1884 by the sisters of La Sainte Union des Sacres Coeur.

The congregation of La Sainte Union was founded in Douai in Northern France in 1862 by Fr. Jean- Baptiste Debrebant to minister to the educational and spiritual needs of children. The mission of each LSU sister was to bring children to the Kingdom of God through love of Jesus and Mary.

By 1860 their mission had established a network of schools from the Diocese of Cambrai in Northern France across the frontier into Belgium. Some years later a community was established in Bath, England. In 1863 the LSU sisters opened their first school in Ireland in Banagher Co. Offaly and then significantly in May 1884 a small group of sisters took possession of the newly built convent of Our Lady’s Bower on the esker on the eastern edge of Athlone. Since its establishment over 130 years ago the Bower has been at the forefront of education in the midlands and today’s modern and fully equipped school for girls is currently ranked 42 out of the top 400 feeder schools for Irish universities and third level colleges.

Our Lady’s Bower continues to make history as it faces the challenge of being the only single sex school for girls in Athlone.
CURRICULUM

JUNIOR CYCLE MANDATORY SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Wellbeing (CSPE, PE and SPHE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JUNIOR CYCLE OPTIONAL SUBJECTS - CHOOSE 3

| Home Economics | Business Studies | Technical Graphics |
| Music | Art | French and/or German and/or Spanish |

LEAVING CERTIFICATE CORE SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Career Guidance</td>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEAVING CERTIFICATE OPTIONAL SUBJECTS - CHOOSE 4

| Business Studies | Economics | Accountancy |
| Biology | Chemistry | Physics |
| French | German | Music |
| Geography | Home Economics | Art |
| History Early Modern | History Late Modern | Agricultural Science |

STUDENTS MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO STUDY LCVP
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF LEARNING
• Choir • Coding
• Public Speaking • IT
Our core mission in Our Lady’s Bower is to ensure that each girl reaches her full potential.

It is our goal, that as many students as possible take exam subjects at higher level.

Our mixed ability classes in 1st year ensure all students are afforded this important life opportunity.

We are very proud of our consistently high transfer rate to 3rd level with the vast majority of our students undertaking a level 8 primary degree.

Our Guidance Programme incorporates:

- Individual Career Appointments ensuring students match their interests and aptitudes with their educational/occupational choices
- Psychometric/Aptitude Testing
- Fortnightly careers newsletter
- School visits from admissions offices of all major Irish colleges and universities.
- Attendance at Higher Options Conference and Open Days
- Study skills programme supported by Parents Association
- Subject choice Information evenings for students and their parents
- Senior Cycle subject choice information day facilitated by teachers in various subject areas.
- Liaison with local community agencies for information and TY, work placement
- Support for students in Scholarship applications
- UCAS and overseas college application support

Students and parents are welcome to access our Guidance Counsellor to discuss matters relating to career or subject choice.

Our Guidance Counsellor and our Student Care team are available for any student experiencing personal difficulty.

97% OF OUR LADY’S BOWER STUDENTS PROGRESS TO 3RD LEVEL

Sunday Times Oct. 2017

Each student has different strengths and abilities.

Prior to enrolment your daughter will complete a comprehensive set of tests to assess her reasoning aptitude in key areas.

The results of this assessment will provide valuable information for you, and your daughter, to make an informed decision regarding subject choice. It will also support her educational development and academic attainment.
NURTURING FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Our Lady’s Bower understands that the transition from primary to post-primary school is a time of great change and challenge. All of our first years are supported and directed through this new phase of their education.

First years receive a two day introduction into life at Our Lady’s Bower at the start of the school year. This enables them to ease into the demands and challenges of a new school: it helps overcome difficulties with timetable, building layout, lockers and daily life in a post-primary school.

This support continues throughout the year where the girls are encouraged and facilitated to participate in the following:

- Little Sister Big Sister
- First Year Wellbeing Evening
- Maths Club
- Scifest
- Doodle 4 Google Competition
- European Day of Languages Table Quiz
- Bookmark Competition
- Irish Club
- Christmas Market
- Nicole Ward Public Speaking Award
- Student Enterprise Programme
- Cupcake Competition
- Visit to Knock
- IMTA Junior Maths Competition
- Ceili
- Book Club
- Maths Week Competitions
- Basketball Blitz
- Texaco Art Competition
- Bebras Computing Competition
- Coding with Ericsson
A CARING SCHOOL

Our Lady’s Bower offers students a broad holistic education set against the atmosphere of mutual respect and dignity for all.

We strive to help our girls to reach their full potential both academically and in the context of extracurricular activities.

Our Lady’s Bower provides a full and varied set of supports for students with Special Educational Needs. These supports are offered following formal and informal assessment and consultation with parents, primary schools and other educational professionals.

The wellbeing of students and staff is of paramount importance. We aim to provide students with life skills for school and life beyond. The Junior Cycle programme including Wellbeing and Key Skills are central to this. We offer a broad range of student support services including:

- School Management/Board of Management,
- Year Heads,
- Class teacher,
- Guidance Counsellor,
- School Chaplain,
- Parents Association,
- Pastoral Care / Wellbeing Team,
- Special Educational Needs Team,
- Student Council,
- Head Girls.

‘The quality of care of students is excellent with a warm inclusive and collegial atmosphere.’
Inspectorate Feedback 2017

‘The Parents Association is very active and has very good links with the school.’
Inspectorate Feedback 2017
Transition Year is an optional year after the Junior cycle. The Department of Education and Skills encourages each school to design its own programme to meet the needs of its students.

Our programme aims to promote the holistic development of our students and to prepare them for their role as responsible members of society. It is designed to provide pupils with the opportunity to discover their own talents, aptitudes and abilities while developing skills and competencies within an academic structure. It requires that students accept responsibility for their own learning and evaluate their progress.

We offer students the space to learn, mature and develop while enjoying a broad variety of learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. By taking our Transition Year option and committing to it, the students develop independent work habits, become more skilled at dealing with people, develop their character and personality, and are inspired to give some of their time and energy to the wider community. The programme also assists young people to connect with adult and working life through the provision of work experience and career guidance modules. Each student spends three weeks on a work placement during the year.
The girls have a regular class timetable which includes: Irish, English, Maths, Religion, Careers, French, German, PE, Communications, Health Education, Science, Geography and Computers as well as modules in subjects such as Video, Tourism, Mental health, Psychology, History through film, Enterprise Education and Architecture. They also come out of class from time to time throughout the year to take part in other activities some of which include:

- School musical
- Drama classes and drama competition
- Westport Outdoor Pursuits Trip
- Visits to the National Gallery, IMMA, Botanic Gardens, Irish Aid centre
- Junk Kouture competition
- Mock Trials competition
- Young Scientist competition
- Gaisce, The President’s Award
- Young Social Innovators
- SciFest
- Public speaking competitions
- Mini-company/Enterprise competition
- First Aid course
- Craolachán radió
- Ceardlanna Gaeilge
- Workshop on style, haircare, makeup and grooming
- Workshops on leadership and confidence building
- Workshops on drug and alcohol misuse
- Skydome mobile planetarium
- Westmeath GAA Coaching and refereeing course
- Hockey coaching course
- Basketball coaching in Primary school
- Primary school Hockey Blitz
- Yoga and self defence classes
- SciFest
- Gaisce, The President’s Award
- Young Social Innovators
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- Young Social Innovators
- Scifest
- Public speaking competitions
- Mini-company/Enterprise competition
- First Aid course

In addition to traditional style homework, TY students are also asked to undertake self-directed learning experiences through projects, assignments, interviews, research and other demanding tasks. The effort they put into this determines the grade achieved at the end of the year which is recorded on their Transition Year certificate. Some girls choose to spend a period of the year improving their language skills abroad or in the Gaeltacht. Students are encouraged to give of their time to the community e.g. in activities with St Hilda’s school, the Gateway project, Special Olympics and the IT training programme for our senior citizens “123 Digital”. The Transition Year programme has been running in the school for over thirty years and it is regularly adapted and updated to meet the needs of our pupils.
BEING A BOWER GIRL

We take great pride in stating that a unique atmosphere of mutual respect exists within our school community. Warm friendly interaction is a feature of working relationships which is nurtured in the girls. Our past pupils carry this quality with them into life after school and we feel that ‘Once a Bower girl, always a Bower girl’.

We acknowledge the benefits of attending an all girls school:

- It builds self confidence
- Provides an environment where students are free to express themselves
- Challenges students to achieve their full academic potential
- Engages, inspires and prepares girls for their futures

In the words of our students

Being a Bower girl is about being respected and connected in our Bower Family

Joining the Bower community is very special and an honour. All the teachers are kind and helpful

Being a Bower girl means having a chance to stand up for what you believe in, helping all of your class, your year and the school

Being a Bower girl means growing in confidence, in spirit and in knowledge

Being a Bower girl means having a community of people who will support you no matter what

it means wearing a uniform you are proud of
In Our Lady’s Bower we place great emphasis on inculcating a love of the Arts. Arts Week, held once in every student’s time at Our Lady’s Bower, aims to give each girl an opportunity to enjoy drama, music, song, film, dance and sculpture.

This extraordinary learning opportunity offered by exposure to many different art forms and artists in the formative years is an experience of a lifetime. During Arts Week the normal timetable is suspended to open a door to this world of wonder and excitement.

The Alpha de Beta Society and the French Ciné Club are but two of the many opportunities the girls have to engage with the arts in throughout the year.
Physical Education is an integral part of the curriculum at Our Lady’s Bower. For us it is an essential component in the development of our students. As the saying goes, a healthy body is a healthy mind.

Research shows that regular physical activity results in improved muscular and cardio respiratory fitness, improved bone and functional health, as well as reducing the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Physical activity also improves mood, promotes better sleep and provides an opportunity for students to make friends and have fun!

Students are provided with a double class of PE each week. As part of the PE programme, students take part in a broad and balanced range of activities including Athletics, Gymnastics, Dance, Adventure Activities, Orienteering, Badminton, Volleyball, Rounders, Ultimate Frisbee, Netball, Olympic Handball and many more. In Transition Year students go on an Outdoor Adventure trip and enjoy activities such as kayaking, surfing, hiking and windsurfing.

As part of the new Wellbeing programme, Physical Activity for Health and Wellbeing is a vital part of the PE programme. Students develop an awareness of their own health and wellbeing by participating in a variety of health and skill related tests, which in turn help them to understand the importance of regular physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Recent Irish research shows that girls who play sport report increased energy levels, confidence and mental wellbeing. In Our Lady’s Bower there is a vast range of extra curricular opportunities available for our students. We are proud to be a prominent competitor in inter schools competitions in hockey, basketball, gaelic football, athletics, cross-country running, equestrian events, golf, rowing and swimming, and have an impressive record of success in these sports. All students are welcome and encouraged to join our school sports teams.

Our Lady’s Bower has excellent on-site sports facilities which include a state of the art sports hall and fitness suite, all weather pitch and new equipment. We look forward to additional facilities in the near future as work has commenced on the upgrading and development of additional external sporting facilities.
We are very proud of our students who have excelled on the sports field in the past year:

- Liberty McGovern: Selected for Connaught U18 Hockey Team
- Aine Gallagher: Selected for Connaught U16 Hockey Team
- Kelley Colgan: Selected as Connaught Young Footballer of the Year
- Ciara McManus: Selected for Ireland U16 Soccer Team
- Carla McManus: Selected for Ireland U19 Soccer Team

- Chloe O’Connor: Best Individual Gross at the Connaught Schools Senior Golf Championships, 2016
- Liadh & Eimear Nic Ghiolla Phadraig: National Gymnastics Champions
- Maeform Borriello: Represented Honduras at the World Championships in Canada

- Vanessa Finnan & Sarah O’Rourke: Selected for Connaught U18 Rugby Team
- Kate Derwin: Represented Ireland U16 Equestrian World Cup, Belgium 2017
- Kayleigh McCormack: Selected for Irish Equestrian Team for 2017 British TREC Champion, 2017
- Jodie Shortall: 2nd place in CSIP 120cm, 7th place CSIO 125cm Show Jumping 2017
- Grace Halligan: Selected for Ireland U17 Basketball Squad
- Niamh Mc Gann, Grace Halligan & Alanna Nic Ghiolla Phadraig: Selected for the Midlands U17 Basketball Squad
- Faith Greene: Selected for the Midlands U14 Basketball Squad
- Alex McManus: Irish U14 Karate Team

- Isabelle Clarke: U17 European Taekwondo Champion

- Claire O’Connor: Represented Ireland in the Youth Olympics in Hungary
- Louise Kennedy & Aoife Green: Selected for Irish Senior Tetrathlon Team

- Cliodhna Murtagh & Molly Larkin: Trials for Irish Rowing Team
FACILITIES

• A Science suite consisting of Physics, Chemistry and Biology laboratories, preparation area and demonstration room

• Two Home Economics kitchens and a dress design room

• Double sized fully equipped Computer room

• Modern Technical Graphics room, computerised for CAD

• All classrooms equipped with computer, data projector, sound system and 100MB wireless broadband

• Smart Interactive Whiteboards

• Two dedicated Art rooms one of which is equipped with a kiln.

• Music teaching and practice rooms

• Lecture halls

• Canteen

• Pastoral care facilities including an Oratory and Meditation room

• First aid room

• Year Heads’ offices

• Full size gymnasium with a dedicated fitness suite

• Library with internet research facilities

• Administration suite

• Career guidance suite

• Three internal courtyards

• Supervised evening study
In recent years Our Lady’s Bower was the recipient of the O’Connell Cup, awarded annually to the student who achieves the highest mark in Ireland, in music in the Junior Certificate exam. The school was also awarded the prestigious O’Cillian gold medal for the top Leaving Certificate music result nationally.

There is a long tradition of excellence in music in Our Lady’s Bower. The music department offers music at Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate level.

Leaving Certificate students have the opportunity to study options including instrumental, technology, conducting or composition. Our state of the art music room is equipped with an interactive white board, computers with ‘Sibelius’ software, Yamaha digital pianos and percussion instruments.

Each year our school orchestra and choir perform at various functions, including our school liturgies, Christmas carol service and summer concert. Rehearsals take place once a week after school. The choir participates in the annual Dublin Feis Ceoil and also enjoy musical events at the National Concert Hall and Bord Gais Theatre.

Our students regularly advance to the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland and the National Wind Ensemble for talented young musicians.

Transition Year students produce a school musical annually. Students not only perform, but manage backstage, sets, lighting, sound, costumes, make-up and front of house. Recent performances include, Annie, Hairspray, All Shook up and The Lion King.

This year’s production with the Marist is Little Shop of Horrors.
THE CLASSROOM & BEYOND

To be asked in our final year to be headgirls of Our Lady’s Bower was a great honour. We are so delighted to be able to give something back to the school in this way.

We were both very honoured to be selected as this year’s Headgirls. We are thrilled to represent the student body of Our Lady’s Bower. We consider the Bower to be a family. It is a place where we feel safe, cared for and respected.

As we’ve watched each new group of first years arrive to the school we’ve known the excitement they feel and opportunities that await them. Since our own first year we have shared experiences that will stay with us for life.

Leaving the Bower will be difficult as it will have been the focus of our lives for six great years. However, we are confident that the connections we have made and the education we have received will have given us a firm footing to take the next step on our life’s journey.

This school has played a significant role in shaping who we are. We will always be proud to call ourselves Bower girls and remember that we will always have a place where we belong.

‘Once a Bower girl, always a Bower girl’ is a phrase that we have been told since first year and now as we find ourselves in sixth year, it is one that we hold very close to our hearts.

In the past year alone our students excelled in the following external competitions:

- 1st Place Senior Social and Behavioural section in BT Young Scientist Competition
- UCD Social Science Award
- Best Display Award in BT Young Scientist Competition
- Appointed a Cool Planet Champion
- Winners of SEAI INESPO at Scifest finals
- 1st Place International Gold Medal representing Ireland at INESPO
- National finalists ISTA Senior Science Quiz Midlands region
- Finalist in the Junior International “Ericsson Girls Who Innovate” Competition
- Scifest 1st Place Individual Senior Life Science
- Scifest Best Individual Display
- Scifest 2nd Place Individual Senior Physical Science Award
- Scifest 1st Place Intermediate Technology Award
- 2nd Place Senior Student Enterprise Awards
- Scifest Best Group Display
- Scifest 2nd Place Life Science Award
- Scifest Highly Commended Junior Life Sciences Award
- Finalist All Ireland Linguistics Olympiad
- Representatives at EYP
- 1st Place Junior Student Enterprise Awards
- Best Display Senior Section Student Enterprise Awards
- Regional Winner and National Finalist Rotary Young Chef Competition
- Westmeath Representative Aiki Baking Competition
- Finalist National Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition
- 1st and 4th place IMTA Junior Maths Competition
- 5 students invited to train for the International Maths Olympiad
- 4 Students National Finalists Bebras Computing Competition
- 4th Place Senior Poetry Category National Seachtain na Gaeilge Competition
- 1st Place Senior Art Category, National Seachtain na Gaeilge Competitions
- 2nd Place Junior Poetry Category, National Seachtain na Gaeilge Competitions
- All Ireland Finalists Feachtas Tráth na gCeist
- Prize Winners in Dúshlán
- 2 Students Spoke at UNGA in NYC as Unicef ambassadors
- 3 Students Gold Medal winners in John Paul II Awards
- Glamour Award Junk Kouture
- Doodle4google semi finalists
- BGESTA Nomination for Best Review.
- Invited to join National Youth Orchestra of Ireland and Irish National Wind Ensemble Clarinet
- 2nd Place Bond Investment Challenge

‘Once a Bower girl, always a Bower girl’ is a phrase that we have been told since first year and now as we find ourselves in sixth year, it is one that we hold very close to our hearts.
OUR ACADEMIC RECORD

The Sunday Times, 27th August 2017, identified Our Lady’s Bower as the top feeder school (non-fee paying) outside of Dublin to universities with 97% of the girls from the 2017 class in third level.

Our Lady’s Bower has consistently been the top feeder school in Westmeath with the highest percentage progression to universities.

Our Lady’s Bower was ranked the 42ND SCHOOL OUT OF 400, the only Athlone school in the TOP 150.

OVer The Last Four Years
55% OF OUR GIRLS ACHIEVED OVER 400 POINTS

OVer The Last Four Years
25% OF THE GIRLS ACHIEVED OVER 500 POINTS

TCD Entrance Exhibition Scholars:
Naoise Rasmussen, Eva Barry, Emma Kennedy, Caitlin O’Brien and Jessica Howard (missing from photo)

UCD Entrance Scholars are first year students who are recognised for their academic excellence who have achieved 560 points or more in their Leaving Certificate.

The UCD Ad Astra Academic programme awards motivated students who can demonstrate high intellectual achievement who want to reach further through undertaking a challenging university programme, Our Lady’s Bower has had 4 recipients of this scholarship in the last three years, each of these girls getting 6 A1’s.

NUI Maynooth Entrance Scholar: Amy Dolan

Aisling Benson was awarded a Naughton Foundation scholarship by the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar. Aisling was one of 36 national recipients of the award. Aisling scored over 600 points in her Leaving Certificate and is studying Science in UCD.

Therese Campbell was awarded an Entrance Scholarship to Maynooth University. The scholarship is awarded to students scoring over 550 points. Therese is undertaking a BBS in Business and Accounting.

Lauren Hughes attained 625 points in her Leaving Cert 2017 and is studying Actuarial Studies in UCD. Lauren will receive an entrance scholarship in the new year.
A PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Our staff engages in a three way partnership with our Board of Management and our Parents Association in order to deliver a quality education to our students.

The Board manages the affairs of the school and provides leadership in the ongoing development of the Whole School Plan.

Our Lady’s Bower Parents Association enables parents to actively engage in the life of the school. The members co-ordinate fundraising and finance Study Skills workshops and third level bursaries.

Parents are encouraged to become involved in their daughter’s education in the following ways:

ATTENDING EVENTS

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<th>Public Speaking Finals</th>
<th>Debates</th>
<th>6th Year Graduation Evening</th>
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<td>Christmas and Summer Concerts</td>
<td>Wellbeing evening for 1st Year</td>
<td>TY Evening</td>
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ATTENDING INFORMATION EVENINGS

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USING THE FOLLOWING TO MONITOR DAUGHTER’S PROGRESS

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<th>Online Access to Timetables, Attendance and Grades</th>
<th>Individual Report Card/ Appointment with Year Head</th>
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</table>
we do second chances,
we apologise,
we forgive,
we respect one another,
we never give up,
we keep our promises,
we encourage one another,
we laugh often,
we belong,
we are the Bower Family.
LA SAINTE UNION
OUR LADY’S BOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Retreat Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

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