

Ballycastle Education

The Sisters were driven to school and back, by pony and trap. Boys and girls were taught in 2 separate schools in a two roomed building on the Glen Road, built in 1892. There were 110 girls in one room. In 1938, a school for girls was built on Main Street in the town. The Boys' school closed in 1970 and a prefabricated school for boys was erected behind the Church in the town. The two schools amalgamated in 1977 with the name St. Brigid's. Mr Mairtin O'Flatharta was Principal and Sr. Mary Gallagher who was Principal in the Girls' school became Deputy Principal. They taught 3rd – 6th in the former Girls' school; and Junior Infants – 2nd were taught in the prefab rooms, by Mrs. Mary Heffron and Sr. Martina Sheridan.

A New Primary School

In 1981, at the request of the Board of Management, the Department of Education decided to build a new school. Monsignor William Moyles was Manager. A four teacher school and General Purpose room was sanctioned. The BOM decided to get an extra room built on at a cost of £25,000. The building was completed in February 1992, consisting of five classrooms and a General Purpose room. It cost in the region of £230,000 and it was officially opened in May 1992.

Other Sisters who ministered in Ballycastle

Srs. M. Angela Murphy, Evangelist Hegarty, Dympna Linnane, Paschal Kelly, Ursula Doherty, Perpetua Hynes, Bernadette Larkin, Assumpta Heneghan, Bernadette Waters, Loreto Burns, Martina Barrett, Nollaig O'Horo, Nancy Clarke, Ita Farrell, Anne Hegarty, and Bridie Hoban, who was the last teaching Sister there and she retired in 2007.

Secondary Education

In 1962 a Secondary school – Stella Maris, was opened. The Sisters moved from the Coastguard's Station into the newly built convent-cum-school. Sr. M. Genevieve Foley was the first Principal in Stella Maris, from 1962 – 1969, followed by Sr. M. Annuntiata 1969 – 1970. The school operated for 38 years. Sr. Anne Kirwan was Principal from 1970 – 1974, Sr. Breeda Leonard from 1974 – 1981, and Sr. Norrie MacHale 1981 – 1994. Srs. Helen Barrett, Marie Celine Halloran, Ann McDonnell,

Ursula Doherty, Canice Burns, Martha Hegarty, Maura Flynn and Martina Sheridan also taught in it. It was never envisaged that Stella Maris would become a large school, even though it served a large Catchment area. And how well it served that area!

Years later, Stella Maris and another Post Primary school nearby – St. Patrick's College Lacken Cross, were both in need of extensions. The then Minister for Education chose to grant an extension to St. Patrick's College in preference to negotiating an amalgamated school and so a decision was taken to withdraw from and close Stella Maris, in 2000. Sr. Freda Kenny was the last Principal plus teaching Sister in Stella Maris. Today, its past pupils are to be found in all professions all over the world. The people of Ballycastle town regretted the loss of the school and Convent as they were Beacons of life and hope in the small but beautiful town. Sisters were very involved with local groups in the parish. There was always a healthy interaction, between Sisters and parishioners that was palpable and mutually beneficial.