



Tús maith leath na hoibre

Professor Gerard Flaherty

Thug Coláiste na Toirbhirte tús maith dom ar mo thuras oideachais.

'The Pres', as it is still affectionately known, has always been a special place to study. The learning environment was very positive and teachers were very dedicated to their students, whom they knew as individuals and whose talents they worked hard to nurture. Some of the best teachers I ever had were in Presentation College Athenry. If only the standards of instruction were as consistently high at third level! Mary Cresham (Science), Maureen Byrne-McKeown (Biology and Chemistry) and Máire O'Connell (French) stood out for me as exemplars. The personal encouragement they gave me increased my confidence as a scholar and had a durable impact on my own teaching philosophy. The Pres had just the perfect blend of discipline and freedom to suit the independent adolescent learner. Life-study balance was promoted in the Pres and I spent many happy hours preparing for table quizzes *as Gaeilge* and public speaking competitions. I received the Student of the Year Award and was given the opportunity to address the entire assembly of students and teachers. These experiences are formative and live with you forever. During challenging times, the support and warmth I received from the teaching staff in Athenry were very much appreciated. A vibrant Catholic ethos informed the school's approach and there was a strong sense of collegiality. We were taught to care for and respect others – fundamentals of a good education surely. My only regret is that I did not play more sport as a second level student. I made up for this in the following decade but I cannot stress its importance for young people's healthy development. As the Pres moves to a fine new building away from the town centre, I hope it retains its central role in the Athenry community and continues to uphold the highest standards of teaching, student support and innovation for which it is known and loved. I look forward to educating more medical students who also benefited from a *tús maith* in the Pres like I did all those years ago.

Gerard Flaherty attended Esker National School (1980-1988) and Presentation College Athenry (1988-1993). He graduated in first position from his medical class at NUI Galway in 2000. He is Professor of Medical Education and Director of the Undergraduate Medical Programme at NUI Galway. He has a special interest in travel medicine and international health. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, a textbook and 5 book chapters. He has 6 university degrees, including a doctoral degree. Gerard is a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Educators (UK), Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, the Faculty of Travel Medicine (UK), the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine, and the International Society of Travel Medicine.