



# Welcome to Castlefinn



***Welcome to Castlefinn we have lots to tell you about our village. First we will explain to you how Castle finn got its name. For many years, the two clans called the O'Neills and the O'Donnells waged war against each other for possession of the rich land of the Finn Valley. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the O'Donnells built a stone castle surrounded by an outer stone wall. It stood on a mound overlooking the river Finn. It was called Caisleán Na Finne which is the Gaelic for the castle on the Finn. No remains of the castle can be seen today. That is how our village got its name. Castlefinn is now a large village and it is situated in the Finn Valley through which the river Finn flows. The fields are rich and fertile in our valley and farming is the main occupation. Ballybofey and Stranorlar are the main towns in the fertile Finn Valley. There are lots of big shops, hotels, a theatre, a large athletic centre and 2 secondary schools. Children from Castlefin usually go to these schools.***

### Where Castlefin is situated:

*There are 32 counties in Ireland. Ireland is divided into four provinces : Ulster, Connacht, Leinster and Munster. The county of Donegal is in the province of Ulster. Castlefin is in the County of Donegal which is one of the 9 counties of Ulster in the north of Ireland. Donegal is part of the Republic of Ireland. Dublin is the capital city of Ireland. Dublin is a vibrant and lively city steeped in history. Tourists usually fly to Dublin, Belfast or Shannon airports to visit our country. The Republic of Ireland has a population of four and a half million. Castlefin is situated half way between Lifford and Ballybofey.*



# History of St. Marys NS



*Our school is an eleven- teacher school located in the village of Castlefinn approximately 8 miles from Stranorlar and Ballybofey on the main Lifford Road. There are 187 pupils in our school this year. Until the year 1958 the only catholic school in Castlefinn was a two roomed building in Hillhead. The girls were taught in one room and the boys in another. The building was later used as a clothing factory by Nena models. In the year 1958 a new school was built at the foot of Hillhead. It was divided down the middle by a wall with the boys in one side and the girls at the other side. In 1961 the wall was knocked down and the school was mixed .In 1966 a new school was built for the boys and the girls used the old school. In 1977 the two schools were amalgamated into a mixed school. In 1981 an extension of two classrooms and a hall were added to the school and later another classroom was added to the oldest building. In 2004 a new extension was added to the existing 1981 extension (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> ) class block .This contains a learning support room, a resource room and a computer suite. In 2009 with the help of our Parents' Committee we got a new computer room with 17 new computers and one interactive whiteboard. We also got an interactive white board in 6<sup>th</sup> and also one in Junior infants.*

# Castlefin Bridge



*Over 200 years ago bridges across the river Finn were very rare. The river was crossed by using ferry boats or by simply crossing when the water was shallow on horse back or by foot. The earliest of the present bridges recorded is the present one in Castlefinn. It was recorded in 1774 that an earlier bridge was built from the ruins of the castle. The existing bridge was mentioned during a survey in 1836.*

## Castlefin Churches



*The new St. Marys Church built in 1966.    Old St. Marys Church built in 1822*



*The Parish Church built in 1867.*



*The Congregational Church built 1857.*

# Businesses in Castlefinn



*The Diamond in Castlefinn was the main market area of the town and many shops and businesses are still in this area today.*

*The Clonleigh Co-Op Society was founded in 1952 and specialises in farm requirements, household electrical equipment, basic building materials, tools and fittings.*

*Porter's Dairy was first established in 1945. They bottle and supply their own milk to most of the Finn Valley area.*

*We also have a CPI Centre ( Castlefinn Partnership Initiative Ltd, Resource Centre ). This centre provides a great variety of resources for our community. There is a computer suite, multi purpose room, crèche, conference rooms, youth club, chemist, doctor's surgery and a play area and a park.*



# A Healthy School

*St Marys N.S is aware of the problems created by having a poor diet when we are young. Therefore because of this, we introduced a healthy eating policy in 2002. We decided to draw up a list of lunch box ideas and send the list home to have parents choose healthy options for their children . The parents were very happy with this new idea . Coincidentally, the Department of Education began an initiative around the same time providing free healthy lunches to the school. These included sandwiches, fruit , yoghurt and milk. Most of our children avail of this although a small percentage still bring in their own healthy option from home. The one exception is on Friday when the children are allowed to bring in a single treat to accompany their normal lunch. As well as being healthier , the other advantage is the smaller amount of litter in the school, because there is so little wrapping involved. This has made the job of our green school committee much easier. Our committee was set up in 2006 and oversees conservation of energy and water and also organizing recycling within the school. The committee consists of 16 children from infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class and they have been so successful that our school was awarded not one but two green flags, for their commitment to this cause.*

