

## **Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh**

### **Board of Management's End of Year Report**

#### **2016-2017**

In 2016-2017 the school distinguished itself in the area of extra-curricular and co-curricular activity – in areas such Young Scientist Exhibition, Vex Robotics and Mini-Company.

The year began in earnest with the publication of the Leaving Certificate examination results in mid-August. The impression formed on the day was of students who had performed as well as they expected, with many doing considerably better than that.

The exam results at LC were very good with almost 30% receiving 500 points or better (the national average is around 10%). There were almost 60% on 400 points or better (the national average is about half that). What was especially pleasing was the performance across the entire group. It is a source of considerable satisfaction that all our students acquitted themselves so well.

CSN students were awarded a UCC Entrance Scholarship and a Trinity College Entrance Exhibition Award this year.

Junior Certificate results were also very satisfactory with almost 90% of results being taken at Higher level, 50% of those results were achieved at A or B grade. All of our top performing students were recognised at the annual Academic Awards Ceremony held later in the year at which UCG Chemistry lecturer, paralympian and past-pupil, Patrick O'Leary, was the guest speaker.

With 706 pupils on the school register, enrolment was historically high. This figure is likely to fall back somewhat next year as the 'bulge year' in 6th Year works its way out. There were 165 applicants for the 120 places available in 1st Year this year and this oversubscription is likely to be repeated this coming year. While Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh remains very much a school in demand, it is important that we continue to highlight our school to primary school parents and pupils and to the local community in general. This is best done by putting on a quality Open Night each year, by producing good quality promotional material and through promoting the successes of the school in local news media. The use of social media (particularly the school's Facebook page which is maintained by Lisa O'Sullivan, our librarian) has also been very effective. The school website (which was re-launched in time for the Jubilee celebrations) and the rebranding of *Spiorad Signals* have also played their part. The Board of Management may need to consider producing a new Prospectus this coming year as copies of the existing one are running low and the information in the Prospectus is fast becoming outdated. This will involve a considerable expense as we have always set out to provide prospective pupils with a professionally produced top-quality product which is reflective

of the standards associated with the school. One area where I feel we could do more would be in getting current CSN news into the local print media. While the *Irish Examiner* tends to shy away from anything other than stories with a national angle, the *Evening Echo* and the *Bishopstown News* are more than happy to print good news stories from the local schools.

It was another busy year in terms of Teaching and Learning with a lot of work going on behind the scenes on the various initiatives being introduced by the DES. The School Development Plan for Literacy has come to the end of its three year cycle and has been a success. The drive to encourage more reading and the OLAM written language initiative have been perceived by teachers as a success overall and we will continue to encourage its use in 1st and 2nd Year homework and exams. The investment in the library (much of it funded by the Parents' Association) has been very worthwhile and the library is now a vibrant, busy place each lunchtime where before it was drab and largely unused. Again, much of the credit for this goes to our librarian, to our SNAs and PME students who run a very successful lunchtime club for junior students in the library. Progress on our School Development Plan for Numeracy has been somewhat slower than anticipated. While we were fortunate that a staff member (Mr. Philip O'Sullivan) volunteered to take on the job of co-ordinator, numeracy hasn't yet managed to develop the same whole-school traction that literacy did. This is, in some part, due to the fact that the development initiative for literacy benefitted from the novelty of the idea and the fact that the DES roll out of the numeracy initiative happened far too quickly after the literacy initiative for it to gain the same kind of traction.

The chosen numeracy target area is *reducing negative perceptions towards numeracy* and the challenge is to apply the initiative at a whole-school level across all the subject disciplines without reducing the initiative to a few token interventions. A start has also been made on the third strand of our School Self-Evaluation process. Under the direction of Mr. Steven O'Connor, School Planning co-ordinator, data has been collected on how 5th Year students 'learn to learn'. This has been formulated into a School Improvement Plan for this strand and a number of interventions have been implemented last year – a study manual was created, study resources were added to the school website and a series of focused study seminars were conducted for 5th Years on two different days last year.

Regrettably, there has been very little progress on the introduction of the new Junior Cycle Student Award. Owing to the entrenched positions of both the DES and the ASTI, we are at something of a standstill. While the English programme was introduced three years ago and Science and Business programmes were introduced last September, our teachers (unlike their TUI counterparts) have not attended inservice training. At the time of writing, the situation has improved in that the industrial relations impasse has lifted and inservice is to be provided for teachers in the voluntary secondary sector from

January next. It is unfortunate that the inservice cycle could not have begun sooner, but that was not possible, it seems.

While Junior cycle reform and innovation will largely be driven by the DES, In terms of curricular change in senior cycle, we have introduced a successful sampling model for Transition Year, where students sample six of their most likely optional subjects with a view to choosing three for 5th Year. The groundwork for this model was laid down through the work of the Strategic Planning Group. We still need to review senior cycle with regard to putting in place some kind of Wellness subject are that might incorporate PE, Yoga, Medication, Social Justice as part of a rotating programme. Through the work of the Strategic Planning Group on Transition Year options, we have shown ourselves to be adept at curriculum design so it should not be beyond us to come up with something that will satisfy DES regulations while also improving the curriculum we offer our older students.

We will also need to do further work on bringing our Posts of Responsibility structure into line with the current needs of the school. While some discussion on the realignment of duties did take place at Strategic Planning Team level (a dialogue that also involved the Assistant Principals), more work remains to be done in this area. Given the fact that any new posts will be awarded under the new competitive structure, it would be as well that we would have a schedule of duties worked out in advance of any competition. Ideally, we would undertake a thorough revamp of the whole structure and the duties attached but that may prove difficult given the lack of time available at the moment for such a process.

Another area that requires immediate attention is the format our new Junior Cycle programme is going to take. There are real opportunities there to identify a programme that best accords with the academic traditions of the school while also incorporating innovation in what we do. This is an area that will be prioritized in the Strategic Planning Group.

School policies are largely up to date with revisions having taken place to key policies such as admissions and mobile phone use during the course of last year. The Data Protection policy was a focus this year and is now in place.

The school's finances remain on a sound footing, thanks in large part to the generosity of our parents who continue to make voluntary contributions to the school. It should be stressed, however, that given the DES's inadequate funding of voluntary schools (30% less than that given to 'state' schools), such voluntary contributions remain essential if the school is to continue to operate as it currently does. The new Board has continued to invest in the maintenance and upgrading of the school building and school facilities and the Board has given its support to the provision of a lunchtime facility for junior pupils.

A very significant investment took place on the installation of a proper drainage system on the school sports field that should make it playable throughout the year. The old ball-catcher netting was also replaced by new more extensive and better quality netting at both ends of the field. This should also have the effect of lessening the risk of damage to cars and buildings in the consultants' clinic premises. A request made to the clinic's owners to share the cost of this improvement was agreed to and a very generous donation amounting to half the total cost of the ball catcher netting was received from the Board of the Consultants' Private Clinic, CUH.

The extra-curricular programme provided by the school's teachers remains varied and very active with large numbers of students participating regularly in hurling, football, soccer, basketball, chess, hill-walking, debating, robotics, computers, yoga, creative writing and traditional music. Co-curricular programmes such as Build a Bank, Enterprise, Maths Circles, An Seomra Caidrimh and Young Scientist also thrive.

This year, in the Young Scientist Exhibition, Vex Robotics and in Mini-company there were wins on a national and international level. It is testament to the culture of an extended education that seeks to involve students outside the classroom as well as within that these successes take place.

It should be emphasised that unlike in other schools where paid coaches are brought in, all of the above-named activities are run entirely free-of-charge by our own teaching staff. We are also fortunate to have an extremely dedicated Transition Year Co-ordinator (Ms. Cleary) who gives so freely of her time to run an extraordinary range of activities and programmes along with the Edmund Rice Action Summer Camp for less privileged primary school students. A very successful ski trip for second year students was also organised again this year by our PE teachers, Mr. Fagan and Mr. O'Sullivan.

Information management has improved greatly at all levels within the school over the last two years. VSWare, our new Information Management System, is now firmly embedded and is a significant improvement on the old administration system. It is far more user friendly and offers much greater functionality. All teachers now receive regular information updates using the notifications feature on VSWare, while email is extensively used to deliver documentation. At the end of this year, we also extended access to VSWare to parents so that they may view results online and check attendance. This will be a boon to parents and will also mean that reports will no longer be posted. This will be both more accessible for parents while yielding a considerable saving to the school in postage, paper and printing costs.

The school's website which was upgraded a few years ago by a very active staff committee also provides extensive information while the Facebook page has become extremely popular with parents and past pupils. The text-a-parent service continues to

provide instant communication to parents while the new-look *Spiorad Signals* edited by Ms. Hazel and Mr Kerins allows for more thoughtful discussion of issues and for reviewing of events.

The Parents' Association chaired this year by Mrs. Goretti Walls continues to be very active and, along with organising various fund-raising activities, arranged meetings and information sessions for parents and students on a variety of topics. The association is also a very active source of fundraising for the school and has raised considerable amounts over the years to fund facilities for the betterment of students and the school.

The Student Council met regularly under the guidance of its staff co-ordinator, Mr. Steven O'Connor. There is undoubtedly scope for further development of this body in the years ahead and it remains to be seen how that will manifest itself.

The new school year sees the appointment of a new addition to the school senior management team. It will enhance the work of Brenda Moriarty and myself. Brenda has had a very successful first year as Deputy Principal and has been a great support to me, to staff and to students and ensuring that the school runs smoothly and effectively.

I would like to thank the Board of Management for their support during my first year as principal. Their collective and individual wisdom and experience is a great help to me in my job. Particular thanks go to Sean Culhane, Chairperson of the Board, for his help and support during the year.

This school is a community that prospers. I am very proud to be associated with that community, helping to deliver the finest education, in the broadest sense, that we can for our young men.

Michael Foley  
Secretary to the Board of Management  
28th June 2017