



End of Year Report For the Board of Management 2017-2018

The school endeavours to provide a holistic education that caters for the academic, physical, mental and spiritual development of our students. It does so by focussing on the work of the classroom, the pastoral care of our students and on the extra-curricular.

In 2017-2018 there was plenty to celebrate academically and on the extra-curricular front.

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 Leaving Cert were good with almost 17% receiving 500 points or better (the national average is around 12%). There were almost 46% on 400 points or better (the national average is 36%). What was especially pleasing was that the performance across the entire group (when looked at from the point of view of placings was good from the top to the bottom). The bottom end was considerably better this year than last. It is a source of considerable satisfaction that all our students acquitted themselves so well.

CSN students were awarded six UCC Scholarships this year.

Junior Certificate results were also very satisfactory with 85% of results being taken at Higher level, 40% 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 past-pupil, Colm Ó Cinnéide, was the guest speaker. Colm is Professor of Human Rights Law at University College, London.

We decided last year to take in an additional class, something we can only do one year in six. There were in excess of 160 applicants for the 150 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 publicising the successes of the school in local news media. The use of the school's website and social media (both maintained by Lisa O'Sullivan, our librarian) has also been very effective. *Spiorad Signals*, edited by Jacqueline Hazel and Tim Kerins, has also played its part; it is distributed as part of a pack on the Open Night and gives a flavour of what happens in CSN over the course of a term or an academic year. It also keeps us all informed of the great range of activities that take place in CSN.

Although we have used a prospectus in the past, this is largely obviated by the production of an Information booklet for prospective incoming students. This has the advantage of currency and can be adapted to suit the needs or changes in a particular year. This is 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. After the hiatus caused by the industrial relations difficulties in relation to the introduction of the new Junior Cycle, that train finally left the station in 2017-18 and we started to get used to a new vocabulary about CBAs (Classroom-Based Assessment) and SLAR (Subject Learning and Assessment Review) meetings. Underpinning it all is the intention to involve students more actively in their learning. This is a profound shift in emphasis and one, I feel, that will yield dividends for teachers and students alike if we approach it with an open mind.

In addition, we have decided on the shape of our new Junior Cycle. Additional time has been given on the timetable to digital learning – up from only one period in 1st Year to two periods in each of 1st, 2nd and 3rd year. This was driven by the recognition that there is a digital component now in all the new subject specifications, that there will be a need for effective skills in presentation and in word processing for Junior Cycle and beyond. In addition, Computer Studies can make a contribution to improving digital wellbeing (how best to use the Internet, Social Media and protect ourselves as we go about our digital lives).

As a further support to this a new Digital Learning centre has been provisioned to cope with the extra demand for access to computers required by the new changes and also

afford more access for general subjects to both computer rooms. It is also hoped to provide access to the new Computer Science programme that is in the pilot stage at the moment in schools.

Under SSE (School Self-Evaluation), both literacy and numeracy are considered to be embedded. We are continuing with the third strand – where fifth Year students ‘learn to learn’. I think this is a hugely valuable area as it helps students to identify the learning styles that best suit them. This has been joined by two new strands – one which hopes to examine the effect of digital involvement on learning and one which wishes to assess how the encouragement of a growth mindset can influence student attitudes to learning.

The Posts of Responsibility structure is in the middle of a process of renewal. This was on foot of a circular (0003/2018) issued by the DES in January. The roles and responsibilities needed to run a modern school have been identified in a process where staff and Board of Management were consulted and ultimately the changes ratified. The next part of the process is the appointment of four new API's (Assistant Principals, Grade One) in the Autumn. After that a review of posts will take place and a refreshed middle management post structure will be put in place. This should be of significant benefit to the school and how it operates.

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 the year. There has been a certain amount of initiative overload coming from different sources. In the second half of the year, schools were expected to deal with the implementation of the new Junior Cycle (with the implied immense cultural changes in how teaching and learning are done), new Child Protection Procedures were introduced. We were also first acquainted with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will be coming to terms with the new requirements that entails in terms of how data is managed for the next while. To that was added the requirements to review the Posts structure mentioned previously. That is in addition to the ‘ordinary’ work of the school, which is to look after our students academically, to look after their welfare and their wellbeing in so far as we can.

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 Board of Management has continued to invest in the maintenance and upgrading of the school building and school facilities. The most recent additions are the Lunchroom area together with shop/kitchen and the redevelopment of the old shop area to provide a caretaker's area, a gear room and a 1st Year bag room. These additions, like the new Digital Learning Centre, were all

completed during the Summer of 2018. They not only provide facilities and functionality, but they also are indicators of a school that is growing, developing and renewing itself.

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.

The main extra-curricular story this year was one of initial disappointment to ultimate success in Hurling, particularly. When Mr. O'Kelly retired, his going left a void in the senior coaching team in hurling. It meant that it would not be possible to compete in senior competitions. This was a blow, both to the school and to the students involved. With the arrival of Mr. Canty, the breach was filled and we ended the year, through the vision of the senior GAA coaching teams, with victories at U-16 and U-161/2 County and Munster levels, together with victories in both hurling and football in the Lord Mayor's Cup.

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 extra-curricular 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 few 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 last 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.

This year, we also implemented use of the Behaviour functionality in VSware. This allows teachers to record incidences of low-level misbehaviour such as failure to produce

work or talking in class. This will help to get an earlier indication where there may be a behaviour issue and, thus, lead to earlier interventions to deal with the matter.

The Parents' Association, chaired this year by Vicky Lane, 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. It is a very useful conduit, allowing students a voice and an opportunity have suggestions listened to and acted on, where appropriate.

This year saw the addition of Andrew O'Reilly to the school senior management team. It has been a great benefit that there are three of us in place to help run the school. It gives us the time, I think, to do more and to do it more effectively. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Brenda and Andrew for being a great and constant support to me in managing the school.

The current Board ends its tenure in October. I would like to thank the members for their support during the past year to me as principal. Their collective and individual wisdom and experience is a great help to me in my job. Particular thanks go to Seán Culhane, Chairperson of the Board, for his help and support during the year.

This school is a real community that prospers. At its core are the staff members who are hugely invested in ensuring the best experience for all our students. I want to thank them for that commitment. I am very proud to be associated with that community and that endeavour, 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 2018