

St. Mary's Parish Primary School

Bryanstown, Drogheda, Co. Louth.

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Annual Board of Management Report: 2023/24

Purpose of the Annual Report:

The purpose of this annual report is to provide a summary of the Board's work for the last school year. This report serves as an addition to the information provided on the school website www.smpps.ie, the various newsletters issued by the school, the information booklet issued to all new parents and any other information provided to parents on all other occasions.

Our School Context:

St Mary's Parish Primary School's enrolment at the end of Sept 2023 was 1006 students, with 63 teachers, 10 SNAs and 10 ancillary staff.

New Board of Management:

The Board of Management began a new term from December 2023. This new board will serve a 4-year term until November 2027.

- Ms. Anne Phillips (Patron's Nominee / Chairperson BOM)
- Fr John Conlon (Patron's Nominee)
- Mr John Weir (School Principal / Secretary BOM)
- Ms Claire Murphy (Teachers' Nominee)
- Ms Elaine Brady (Parents' nominee)
- Mr Niall Malone (Parents' Nominee)
- Ms Agata Laszczynska (Community Representative / Treasurer BOM)
- Mr Gerry Smith (Community Representative)

Throughout the last school year the Board held 8 regular meetings and a number of additional meetings to ratify appointments or consider appeals in relation to school enrolment.

Our Ethos:

St. Mary's Parish Primary School is a Catholic school and aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupils: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a Catholic school we provide Religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and we promote the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

This past year our Catholic ethos was evident in many ways including the following:

- The enrolment and commitment ceremonies for the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation were held in the Church in Oct/Nov.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation was held in February.
- The sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated by Bishop Deenihan in February.
- First Communions were celebrated in May.
- School masses were held monthly e.g. new school year, 6th class graduation, Catholic Schools week.
- Students in 6th class completed the RSE programme with Accord in November.

Child Safeguarding and Anti Bullying:

The Board of Management confirms that it has met its obligations in respect of Department of Education Child Safeguarding and Anti-Bullying Procedures. A full annual review of these was carried out by the Board and notification was published on the school website.

School Accounts:

The financial management of our school was conducted in strict compliance with Department of Education requirements. The treasurer issued a financial report at each Board of Management meeting, and prepared annual accounts for the school year 2022-23. These were examined and certified by a local accountancy firm, W.O. McGrory, and all was in order. Our accounts were submitted to the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) of the Department of Education. The process of certifying the accounts for 2023/24 will soon be completed before submission to FSSU by February 2025..

Teaching and Learning

- Policy Development: The following curricular policies were developed /reviewed and ratified throughout the year: Homework Policy, Science, Assessment, Visual Arts, RSE.
- A new Maths curriculum has been launched by the Department of Education as part of the new primary curriculum framework. The staff received some professional development in this area and will begin the rollout of the new curriculum this school year 2024/25. .
- School Self Evaluation: The staff continued their engagement with the School Self Evaluation (SSE) process this year. Our goal for 2023/24 was to continue work on wellbeing. Following engagement with staff, it was agreed to focus on the development of wellbeing in the curriculum. A number of programmes were examined and an Irish programme entitled 'Weaving Wellbeing' was selected. This programme will be implemented from 2024/25.
- The school took part in the Department's "Say Yes to Languages" programme. An external tutor worked with our 4th classes on an 8 week introductory module in Spanish.
- Standardised Test Results: Standardised testing was carried out in May 2024. The school has changed to the Drumcondra Online test for literacy. Scores were reported to the Department of Education as required. The results were above average in both literacy/English and numeracy/Mathematics. Individual scores were reported to parents on the end of year school report card.
- Organisational Policies: The following organisational policies were reviewed during the year: Data Protection Policy, Critical Incident Management Plan, Admissions Policy / Statement, Discretionary Leave Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment, Class Redistribution (Following issues, the Board reviewed this policy and agreed to implement it with 1st classes in the school year 24/25, with a further review of this policy planned in 2024/25).
- Parent Teacher meetings were held in November.
- Junior Infants - In June the school held an open day where new parents were able to meet the JI teacher for next year. Enrolment: 112 Junior Infants enrolled at SMPPS in September 2023.

School Activities and Achievements:

Some examples of activities which were held include:

- **Clothes Recycling:** With the support of the Parents Association we held 3 clothes recycling drives which raised almost €2000 for additional resources for the school.

- **6th Class Hoodies** - The 6th classes fund-raised towards the purchase of class hoodies for the graduating year group.
- **Christmas Shows** - Christmas shows were held in the school for Infants, 1st and 3rd class while 5th class held a carol service in the church with additional performances by the school choir and some staff members.
- **Active Schools Flag** - During the year the school completed a range of activities leading to the award of the Active School Flag. One main event was our Run Around the World where we collectively ran over 40,000 km. The event culminated in an open event where many parents joined us to cover the last 5000 km.
- **STEM Grant** - The school was awarded almost 10k on a STEM grant. This was spent on Lego robotics kits for use in n 3rd and 4th classes as well as additional micro bits in 5th / 6th. A general STEM project to encourage women in science: **See It, Be It, Do it now!** will be organised in collaboration with the Sacred Heart in 2024/25.
- **Graduation:** The 6th class graduation took place in the school at the end of June..
- **Charity work:** During the year students led fundraising for several charities and school activities e.g. St Vincent DePaul Drogheda Branch, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Children's Ward.
- **Messages of Positivity:** Following consultation with students, a local artist was commissioned to paint messages of positivity throughout the school, This was funded by a Creative Schools grant from the Arts Council. This work will be continued in 2024/25.
- **Extra-curricular activities:** Our students enjoyed a range of activities and many of them represented the school in Gaelic football, soccer, chess, quizzes.
- **Theme weeks:** These included Wellbeing/Friendship week, STEM week, Catholic Schools Week, Anti-Bullying week, Seachtain na Gaeilge and Active Schools Week
- **International engagement:** Following an application, the school has received Erasmus+ accreditation. We will begin a series of European mobilities from June 2024. This may include mobilities for staff, job-shadowing and possible student exchanges with 6th class students..
- **School lunches:** The school continued to work with The Lunch Bag to allow parents to purchase school lunches. The school has applied to join the hot lunch programme funded by the Department of Social Welfare. It is expected that the school will receive notification in October 2024 and will then proceed with the tender process with hot lunches being provided free to all students from Sept 2025.
- **Bake Sale:** Our 6th class organised a bake sale to part fund their school hoodies. Remaining monies raised were donated to charity.

- **After-school Clubs / Camps:** The Board approved the running of a range of after-school clubs and also Summer and Easter Camps.
- One of our 5th classes worked in collaboration with Drogheda Arts Centre on a float to take part in the **St Patrick's Day Parade**.
- **Summer Provision** - a number of staff organised the school-based summer provision programme which took place in early July. This was the first time the school had participated in the programme and it was very well received by parents and participating students.

The Board wishes to congratulate and express its thanks to all pupils, staff and parents involved in organising and/or supporting the above activities.

School Development:

In the past year:

- The junior yard was resurfaced and fenced to provide an enclosed play area.
- The school internal walls were painted with many positive messages. Similarly many posters were added including notice boards with messages selected by students which are designed in Lego
- Nurture Room / Outdoor classroom - it was agreed that the Parents Council fundraising should be dedicated to the development of a nurture room / outdoor classroom.

Staffing:

- Retirements / Resignations: Ms Aoife Rogan and Mr Niall Herron plus Ms Josephine Conlon (SNA) resigned during the school year. We wish all departing staff members well in the future and we thank them for their contribution to the school.
- The substitute crisis continued to create staffing problems. It remains a challenge to fill positions for teachers who are sick or on leave.

Student Council:

The student voice was very active during the year. The student council met regularly and participated in many aspects of school life. The principal allocated them funds from one of our non-uniform days. They drew up a budget and decided how best to use this funding to better the school e.g they responded to a request from staff for portable music players for use in PE. The

council researched the various options and purchased players which they then presented to staff. They also collaborated on a number of projects during the year e.g. working with the Transition Students from St Mary's DS to paint the fence in the junior yard.

Parents' Council:

The school is supported by a very active Parents' Association/Council. The Parents Association met regularly during the year. The principal / deputy principal attended all of these meetings. Some activities which took place:

- Monster Draw: Over €22,000 was raised. These funds will be used to develop a nurture room and outdoor learning space.
- Book Fair: A very successful book fair was held in February. 65% is returned to the school to spend on books. Many thanks to all the parents who gave up their time to man the desks.
- Clothes Recycling Drive: This ran on 3 occasions during the year and raised €2000 for various activities in school.
- Refreshments were provided for Sports Days.
- Teas / Coffees were provided at Junior Infant open day / Graduation / Grandparents Mass.
- A reception was hosted in the school following all First Communion masses.
- A presentation on the work of the Parents Association was given to incoming parents at Junior Infant open day.
- School Uniform recycling drive in aid of Drogheda Women's Refuge

The Board wishes to express its sincere thanks to the members of the Parents' Association for giving so willingly of their time and talents throughout the year. Their support for the school is hugely beneficial and very much appreciated.

Finally, the Board wishes to acknowledge the outstanding work of staff to provide the highest level of education to the children in their care on a daily basis. The Board would also like to very highly commend all pupils and parents for the great work they do throughout the year, and for their support in building a strong and vibrant school community. *Trí nasc, ár neart!*

Board of Management, SMPPS

31 August, 2024.