

Principal's report to the AGM October 3rd 2017

Board of Management

The BoM with Eileen Hall as chairperson is in its third year of four and meets monthly. Eileen is in weekly contact and is currently overseeing the appointment of a new principal. Her dedication to the school knows no bounds. James Crudden as treasurer of the board manages our accounts to a very high standard. He monitors monthly reports with BOM and has a forensic command of the accounts. Father David acts as our chaplain and supports the prayer life of the school. We owe him a debt of gratitude for sharing his spirituality. Gerry Burns shares openly his expertise on all legal matters giving sound advice and support. Orlaith Logan and James Somers as parent representatives continue to be active participants during meetings. Aisling Browne is the teacher representative who brings all concerns or questions that the staff may have to board meetings.

I am deeply appreciative of the commitment, energy, professionalism and frankness of all BoM members and the school is very lucky to have them working on their behalf.

Building update

The new facility will include a Special Educational Needs Unit (SEN unit) containing 2 SEN classrooms, 2 safe base rooms, multi-sensory room, central activity room, toilets and shower room, multi-purpose room, linen and sluice room. The SEN unit will also contain a shared central space for both rooms. 4 Special Education Tuition (SET) rooms, two rooms for HSCL, a playroom, two offices and toilets will also be included in the build. I anticipate that the facility will be up and running by the start of school in September 2018. To date Peak Construction and Barry Fitzgibbon as project manager are doing an excellent job. The Junior School has responsibility for paying Peak Construction monthly. The total cost of the build is deposited in our bank account in five tranches. We have to date received a payment of €431K from the D.E.S. Noreen is managing the payment and doing a superb job.

Both the Senior and the Junior school were approved for **temporary accommodation** in May of this year. Unfortunately we still have not heard and the soonest the prefabs will be in situ is April 2018 which means our HSCL officer and one of our Special Education Teachers (SET) have no room from which to work. Due to the discovery of a gas main under the foundations of the new extension the school had no heating for the month of September as the gas main needed to be disconnected. Any building job is fraught with difficulties. We still have some of them and they have to be dealt with on an ongoing basis.

I'd like to congratulate the staff on maintaining a relaxed and quality learning environment for the children. I want to acknowledge the excellent work of Peak Construction and Fitzgibbon McGinley Architects who are our project managers, for the standards of workmanship and safety they are providing during this work. We must also acknowledge the contribution from the Department of Education and Science. They have given us €2.12 million to complete what will be a magnificent addition to our school.

Financial Situation

Thanks to the excellent work by James Crudden our treasurer our accounts are on a highly professional footing. Unfortunately this has the effect of making it very clear that we are in a strategically precarious position. We are able to function on a day to day basis with enormous levels of contributions from parents – in excess of € €23.585.00 to date in requisites, 69.9% of parents have paid us something. Thanks to Noreen's assiduous work on the management of the hiring of the halls we raised just under €26.9k last year in hall rental despite the fact that both our halls were out of commission due to the installation of a new fire alarm system. 30% of all monies collected for school are not from the DES. This is something we have to be very aware of. Thanks to all the parents who have paid their requisite money to date. Last year it cost €29k per month to run the school.

Enrolment September 30th 2017

Our total number on Roll at September 30th was 409 pupils which is down 15 on last year. This may be due to the second free preschool year that many parents are availing of. We needed 411 to keep our 16th teacher. With the reduction in the Pupil Teacher Ratio we hopefully will retain all our class teaching staff for next year. There are 90 children from 16 different countries who have brought a lovely diversity to the school. (Poland, Slovakia, Algeria, China, Russia, The Philippines, Ghana, Malta, Spain, Nigeria, Latvia, Croatia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Romania)

Attendance comparison between school year 2015-2016 and school year 2016- 2107

In 2015/16 total percentage attendance was 92.5%

In 2016/17 total percentage attendance was 93.1% an improvement of .6%

In 2015/16 the total number of days lost through absence was 5,788 days

In 2016/17 the total number of days lost through absence was 5,306 days an improvement of 482 days

In 2015/16 89 children were returned to TUSLA for absences totalling 20 days or more.

In 2016/17 80 children were returned to TUSLA for absences totalling 20 days or more. An improvement of 9 children

Planning and Organisational developments

Droichead

The directive not to participate in Droichead was lifted in May of this year. Droichead will be the only route of inducting Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) into our profession by the school year 2020-2021. Our involvement in Droichead and our support of newly qualified teachers is excellent. We have 10 fully trained Professional Support Team (PST) members Maria O Dwyer, Rosarii Harty, Bairbre Elwood, Louise Moore, Laura Heavey, Claire O Regan, Maeve Keogh, Aisling Browne, Jessica Raymond and Sandra Hynes who give of their time willingly both during and after school hours without recompense, to mentor, guide and support NQTs as they begin their life long journey of learning. We have two NQTs this year and two PSTs.

Reading Recovery (RR)

Eileen Hill has completed training in the **Reading Recovery** programme. She, Melissa Cooney, Rosarii Harty, Maeve Doyle and Maeve Keogh are now trained in this highly skilled methodology to develop children's reading. This has also resulted in the roll out of **Literacy Lift off** in senior infants and 1st classes.

Maths Recovery (MR)

We are implementing an initiative called '**Maths Recovery (MR)**' across the classes. We have trained 9 teachers in this methodology with Maeve Keogh being trained this year. Both RR and MR initiatives can change the way that children think about their mathematics and reading and to recover any ground that they may have lost out on relative to their peers.

Time to Read Programme

We were fortunate in being accepted onto the Time to Read programme both last year and this year. This programme was part of the Business in the Community Initiative (BITC) and was offered to DEIS schools. Last year 10 trained volunteers provided additional one-to-one reading opportunities for 10 2nd class children. The programme ran for 20 weeks in the school and concluded with an assembly of appreciation and certificate presentation. Business in the Community Ireland supplies books and programme materials as well as planning, launch, evaluation and support services through Órla O'Dwyer, Regional Co-ordinator. We partnered with Horse Racing Ireland for this initiative and are partnering with them again this year.

Twelve teachers are trained in a programme called ‘**Ceol**’ which is a specialist music training programme. We have also purchased the DVD set for teachers to reinforce the training they have received.

The ‘**Aistear Programme**’ is firmly embedded in Junior Infant classrooms and its implementation is been supported by the SET team for one hour each day. The senior infant teachers are also implementing Aistear in their classrooms. The play activities program will be developed further by structuring the activities with a view to being specific about pupil outcomes.

We continue to run **homework club** for a restricted number of targeted children. Thanks to the SNAs and teacher volunteers who help Margaret deliver an effective and efficient home-work club. Breakfast is delivered to the school each morning and is available to all those who need it.

We also have a limited Play Therapy service for children who are experiencing a range of potential mental health concerns. In 2015 we received a grant from the County Kildare Leader Partnership which allowed us to provide therapy for extra children. Unfortunately this funding has been withdrawn! In a context where there is an increasing emphasis on Mental Health and well-being this service is particularly needed. This year for the duration of the build Máiréad Carroll will provide a building resilience service to class groups as she has no home to work with individual children

These are our endeavours to be innovative and to prepare the children for the workplace of the 21st Century. The dedication to the day to day job of managing the children’s learning in classes of between 25 and 31 (One of the largest class sizes in the OECD Countries) is commendable. Parents can be very confident about the quality of the experience that children are having.

In school Management Team (ISM).

Our ISM is seriously depleted and a circular issued by the DES two weeks ago confirms that our current allocation of Posts of Responsibility remains the same. The organisation of post holders will change. For a staff of 26 we are entitled to 1 administrative principal, 1 deputy principal, 1 assistant principal (API) and 3 assistant principals (APII). which is equivalent to our current position. Budget 2017 allocated €7m for posts of responsibility. However this does not seem to be reflected in extra allocations to schools. Our present ISM will have to continue to carry a significant administrative responsibility. At one stage we had 3 Assistant principals and 7 B post holders. The challenges caused by this reduction are numerous. The following areas are not being adequately met despite hard work by those that are left. Our web page, monthly newsletters to parents, policy management; development of plans e.g. Literacy and Numeracy strategy are some areas that we need to focus on. We are extremely fortunate to

have a dedicated staff who voluntarily takes up these extra duties in their own time.

Staffing:

Teaching staff has been increased by one this year due to the new SET allocation. We now have 26 teachers. These are welcome but very necessary. We are still short of at least two teachers to meet all the learning needs. An appeal for an extra EAL post and an extra special education teacher were refused by the DES. We also have an increase in the number of SNA staff, 6.32 an increase of .83 on last year

Special Education Teachers (SET)

A new model for allocating special education teaching resources to mainstream schools was introduced in September. Schools received a single allocation as opposed to a staggered allocation process comprising general allocations and NCSE allocations. This new model will give greater autonomy to schools to allocate resources to the pupils who most need these resources, regardless of their diagnosis. The principle of the new SET model is that *“The pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support”* The allocation of hours is based on a school’s educational profile which comprises two components

1. Baseline component i.e. number of pupils enrolled
2. Educational profile component
 - Pupils with complex needs
 - Standardised test results
 - Social context to include gender, level of disadvantage, number of EAL students, number of travellers

We received 175 hours and one EAL post which bring our SET team to 8. We as a team share the complex need, EAL and learning support element. We are continuing to refer pupils for assessments if we feel more expert guidance and support is needed. The SET team continue to struggle against impossible odds in seeking to address all the learning needs presented to them on an ongoing basis. The level of collaboration between class teachers and SET teachers is commendable. Last year we identified 97 pupils who did not receive adequate support. Some support was given but because of some children presenting with more complex concerns more individualised intensive support was needed. Teachers expressed concerns about the increasing number of children, 47 presenting with anxiety issues and/or have social/emotional issues (49.47%). A special education teacher who is trained in **Fun Friends**, a school-based anxiety prevention and resilience building programme piloted this 12 week 1 hour

programme in one 1st class, but because of the pressure of literacy, numeracy, complex needs and lift off intervention she was unable to implement the programme fully this year. The school has 4 trained Fun Friend teachers and the DEIS plan for 2017- 2018 will prioritise training for teachers in DEIS schools early in 2018.

Standardised Test Results School Year 2016- 2017

Test	Class	Standardised Test results 2017 Average	NRIT 2017 Average	Range
English Micra-T	1st	104	102	70 -130
English Micra- T	2nd	101	103	70 -130
Maths- Sigma-T	1st	101	102	70 – 130
Maths - Sigma-T	2nd	101	103	70 – 130

These Averages show that we are maintaining a consistent standard. The average scores in 2nd class are marginally below the non- reading intelligence score averages. The first class reading scores are also ahead of the average scores on the children’s non reading intelligence (NNRIT) scores for English and slightly behind for Maths. The analysis of test results is given detailed consideration by the SET team in collaboration with class teachers in allocating children to learning support.

The **Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)** team, Aisling Browne and Jenny Gannon, work with Parents/ Guardians to create an essential link between parents, the school and the wider community. Our Parents’ Room / Parents' Group is a welcoming and inviting space that enables parents to meet and chat and to pursue their own interests through the wide range of courses that are offered to Parents and delivered by Course Tutors. These courses include Cookery, Stress Management, Personal Development, Guitar, Homework Help, Literacy, Numeracy, Parenting and the Visual Arts. We go on day trips to various places and outings e.g. Dáil Éireann, National Ploughing Championships etc. We are always available to chat, Aisling can be contacted by mobile phone or calling to the main office to leave a message for her - all conversations are completely confidential.

Technology and Communications.

The School database system 'Aladdin' has greatly enhanced communications with parents and is now an integral part of our management of rolls, the publication of school reports, the issuing of texts to parents to inform them of upcoming events etc. and the maintenance of school records.

We also changed our email management system to Google. Our domain name is now embedded in g mail. Although we received an IT grant last year and are hoping to receive one this year the board continues the policy of allocating money from requisites payments to maintain our technology infrastructure. Last year €16,556 was taken from class teacher's requisite allowance which covered maintenance and replacement of essential equipment. Without this it would simply have broken down at this point. The projected budget spend for 2017-2018 school year is €17,000. Great Credit is due to Bairbre Elwood for her voluntary work in the area of IT.

The school website requires further development and support and a number of strategies are under consideration.

Mary Linehan has done an outstanding job on media and PR communications we have a positive profile on local media. When you read good features about us she is the one behind them.

Volunteers and Work experience

The signing of the volunteer's charter is an integral part of the programme and is the basis of our child protection strategy with volunteers. We now have all our volunteers garda vetted prior to their commencement as volunteers. At least 28 of those people worked in the school last year plus the 10 volunteers from Horse Racing Ireland. They help with artwork, cooperative games, basketball, organising libraries and simply talking to children about books.

Work experience people brought over 1000 hours or the equivalent of 172 days to benefit the children this year. This as well as 25 weeks of teaching practice over the year. A remarkable contribution is made to the quality of the children's education as a result of those who seek work experience and those who volunteer to help. Thanks to Emer Prendiville and Rosarii Harty for managing these.

Student Placement

The total number of students facilitated by SCMJ between Autumn 2016 and Spring 2017 was 20!, 13 were from Pats/DCU and 7 from Marino. In total it added up to the equivalent of 88 weeks....2,200 hours of teaching. That number includes a mix of 2, 3, 4 and 10 week placements.

Parents' Council

Fionula Farragher and her council did great work last year. They helped us to raise over €10,000 through their witches walk and bunny hop activity. They organised a bag pack in Dunnes to raise money to equip our football team with jerseys, shorts and socks. €1,000 was raised. They have worked to find new volunteers and their committee is up and running already. They are a welcome addition to our school community and we are very grateful to them.

Health & Safety

No annual report can be left without a reference to the Safety of the children going to and coming from school.

We teach the children the walkways to the school. Because of the construction we need parents to be extra vigilant. The behaviour of a small number of drivers is always a cause of concern. We have a clear strategy in place where we ask parents to note and report the colour and registration number of cars that are a cause of danger in the car park and at the school entrance. We must continue to work at this if we are to put a stop to unacceptable behaviour.

In relation to safety I must also advise parents that we are finding great difficulty in coping with changes in phone numbers when we are not informed about it. Please, please, please if your phone number changes let us know immediately so we can have contact numbers for all our parents.

Gifts for Teachers at end of year. Parents are encouraged to make a donation to St V De Paul perhaps instead of spending money on gifts for teachers. Ask your child to draw a picture or write a sentiment if you want to show your appreciation.

Acknowledgements.

Our vision is 'that working as a team we provide support and education to all children of every class, creed and ability. That every aspect of the child's intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social needs be nurtured and encouraged to develop to its utmost potential in his or her own time in a happy safe environment.'

The values in the Teaching Council Code of Conduct for teachers are Trust, Care, Respect and Integrity. These values encapsulate all that is Scoil Mhuire Junior School.

There are so many good things going on in Scoil Mhuire that it is difficult to name them all.

To each **teacher** and **special needs assistant** for their dynamic interest, commitment to quality teaching and learning and for their positive, caring interest in all the children. They uphold our Vision Statement with pride. Thank you.

To Noreen Lawless, our **school secretary**, an outstanding administrator. Her management of our accounts is second to none and I have learned so much from her since my commencement as Acting Principal. To Margaret Fennell, her organisational abilities are to be commended and her role as **School's Completion officer** is excellent. Both Noreen and Margaret are the welcoming face of Scoil Mhuire and I am indebted to them.

What can I say about John Lawlor, our **caretaker**. There is no task he cannot do to an exceptionally high quality. His skill never ceases to amaze me. Thank you John.

To our **cleaning staff**. We are very grateful to you all for keeping our school always looking clean and fresh.

I cannot finish an annual report without acknowledging our **Deputy Principal** Eileen Hill. She quietly and diligently carries out her responsibilities and more to an exceptionally high standard. She has been a constant source of support and help to me in my role as Acting Principal.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir as ucht bhur ndícheall a dhéanamh. Bail Ó Dhia oraibh.

We are committed to doing our best every day. It is indeed a privilege to work with your children. Be assured of our very best endeavours through 2017-2018.

Maria O' Dwyer
Acting Principal