

## Annual Report of the Board of Management to the Parents of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Foxford for the School Year 2009 – 2010

*The purpose of this Annual Report to Parents is to provide a summary of information on the operation of St. Joseph's Secondary School in line with the requirements of the Education Act.*

*The Report serves as an addition to the information provided on this website, the various Newsletters issued by the school, letters to Parents, the Information Booklet provided to all Parents in August of each year, the School Prospectus and information provided to Parents on Open Nights. The following summaries are now provided to Parents, members of the school community and members of the wider community.*

### Overview of 2009-2010 School Year.

St. Joseph's Secondary School, a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Achonry, Dr. Brendan Kelly is in its 49<sup>th</sup> year in its present location. Its enrolment of students continues to increase adding pressure to its present resources and in particular its human resources and buildings. Teaching and learning continues to be the main focus of the school and the results achieved in State examinations continue to be excellent. Almost 85% of its Leaving Certificate cohort of 2009 proceeded to Third Level courses and a further 12.5% repeated in order to achieve higher points for courses. The school is staffed by a committed and dedicated staff of teachers, SNA's and ancillary staff and supported by the Trustee, a new Board of Management, Parents' Council, Students' Council, the local Parish clergy and the local community.

During the year significant improvements were made to the school building as follows:

- The completion of Astro Turf and outdoor play areas
- The addition of a new tiered classroom with accommodation for 72 pupils
- The replacement of the roof and windows on the Top School
- The extension of the Woodwork Room
- The addition and upgrading of disabled facilities
- Provision of laptops to subject departments

In common with many schools of its type, St. Joseph's found the past year to be one of the most challenging to date as a result of Budget 2009 education cutbacks. In particular the abolition of many grants, the imposition of charges such as Water Rates, the non-increase in Capitation Grants, the main source of school income and the increase in the Pupil Teacher Ratio. Particularly challenging for school management and staff is the Moratorium on Posts in schools and the ASTI Industrial Action, which is leaving posts such as Year Head for Third Year, Examinations Secretary and Special Education Needs Co-ordinator unfilled. Finally the delay in the announcement of the Investment for Information Technology by the Department is regrettable in view of the enormous costs of maintaining and providing equipment in the school.

## 1. School Enrolments and Staffing

School enrolments continued to grow with numbers now reaching 360 students at the time of writing this Report. (September 2010) There were 26.60 Whole time teacher equivalents (WTE's) permitted by the Department of Education and Science (D.E.S.) and there were 30 teachers on the staff, 4 Special Needs Assistants (3 posts), a full-time Secretary, a full-time Caretaker, a part-time Payroll Secretary and 2 part-time Cleaners were also employed by the Board of Management. Trends in primary school enrolments in our catchment area indicate a school population of 400 pupils within 3-4 years.

## 2. Trusteeship, Management and Representation

St. Joseph's continues to work closely with its Trustee, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Bishop of Achonry, who maintains close connections with the school. St. Joseph's. The Board of Management is in its first year and it is chaired by Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Mulligan. The Board met monthly and it is constituted in line with the Articles of Management for Secondary Schools. The Board was supported by an active Parents Council which met once to twice a term. It comprises of representatives of Parents of current students in the school and it was chaired by Mrs. Patricia Sherry. The Student Council is elected annually and it comprises of student representatives from each year in the school. All of these bodies played a highly supportive and active role in the school in the school year 2009 – 2010.

## 3. Financial Management and Accounting

The financial management of the school is conducted under the JMB/AMCSS Guidelines and is in strict compliance with D.E.S. requirements. The School Accountant is Mr.

James Hughes who audits the school accounts annually for the Board of Management. The accounts are in turn examined by the Finance sub-committee of the Board of Management, which reports to the Board. The accounts were presented to the School Trustee, Bishop Kelly and to the Financial Services Unit of the Joint Managerial Body for Secondary Schools, which reviews school accounts on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

The accounts of the school are computerised and are operated on the TAS Books system. In the school year 2009 – 2010 the school had a small deficit in its accounts. School finances continued to be tight and further prudent financial management is required in the future, particularly in view of the education cutbacks. The Board of Management has been proactive in addressing school expenditure and it has a detailed budget in place for 2010-11. All of the education partners have been consulted in this matter.

#### 4. Inspections

The Art Inspector, Mr. Jon Curran inspected the teaching and learning in Art in May 2010 and his report is awaited. There was also an audit by the Department of the Summer Works Scheme of 2007 and everything was found to be in order. The school canteen was inspected by the Environmental Health Officer in February 2010 and her Report was also favorable.

#### 5. Academic achievements

The Board of Management recognises and applauds the outstanding academic achievements of students in the Junior and Leaving Certificate. The teaching and support staff are highly commended. St. Joseph's is now rated in the top 150 schools in the country (Irish Independent December 2009) for the percentage of its students who proceeded to Third Level in 2009.

The Board notes also the performance of students with special education needs and it commends highly these students and their teachers. The support of the DES and the State Examination Commission in achieving these results is acknowledged and appreciated.

#### 5. Extra-Curricular Activities

Participation in extra-curricular activities in St. Joseph's reached a very high level in 2009-2010. The Board of Management acknowledges the participation of students, teachers, staff and parents in these activities.

There were notable victories in GAA and in Athletics a number of athletes reached the All Ireland Finals having qualified at the Connaught Championships.

Whilst it is impossible to mention all of the extra-curricular activities taking place in the school, the Board notes the success of the Transition Year Tour to the Belgian European Space Centre, the TY Pantomime 'Cinderella', 1st Year Tour to the Aran Islands, the Annual Sports Day organised by the Student Council and the achievements of students in music competitions such as Fleadh Cheoil Mhaigh Eo, Connacht Fleadh Cheoil na

hÉireann. Note is also made of fundraising by students for charitable purposes. The Board wishes to congratulate also participants in the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition and the school team which once again achieved 2nd Prize in its category. There were significant achievements by the Transition Year students in the Mayo County Enterprise Board Enterprise Competition. The Board commends these students and their teachers.

## 6. School Development Planning

The school continues to engage actively in the process of School Development Planning. All of the partners in the school are consulted in regard to school planning and policy and there was engagement by all in 2008 – 2009.

The main priority was the review of the Code of Behaviour in line with the NEWB Guidelines.

This review is now complete and is being presented to the Board of Management for ratification at its September 2010 meeting. The Religion Policy was commenced and approved by the Board on 21 January 2010. The Student Council Constitution was commenced and approved by the Board on 26 February 2010.

The Board gave serious consideration to the growing numbers in the school and the shortage of accommodation. It decided to apply to the Department for additional accommodation and for a new roof on the Top School Building. Both of these developments have now been completed.

## 7. Matters of Concern for the Board of Management

Given the increased enrolment in the school and the projected rise in the student population, the Board continues to be concerned at the lack of accommodation in the school.

Application for an extension to the rear of the main school building was made in October 2005. The Principal and the Parents Council continue to communicate with DES on the provision of this extension. Political support has also been sought from TD's and Ministers. There is no further news on the achievement of a major extension for the school. It is unlikely to be granted in the present difficult economic climate.

The Board is concerned also about the tight situation in relation to school finances particularly in view of the education cutbacks. The abolition of the Book Grant (now restored), the abolition of certain grants, the severe cutbacks in the Pupil Teacher Ratio and Supervision/Substitution announced in Budget 2009 has had a negative impact on the school. The Board is concerned also about the imposition of new charges such as Water Rates, the cost of Health and Safety, Information Technology and maintenance/replacement of equipment. It is a very challenging environment for schools at present.

## 9. Conclusion

The Board of Management wishes to express its appreciation to the hard working dedicated and committed staff of St. Joseph's led by the Principal, Mr. Brendan Forde. It also commends the involvement and work of the Parents Council, Student Council and members of the community who actively support the school in many ways. The students of the school are deserving of special mention for their excellent behaviour, co-operation, their academic and extra-curricular achievements.

The Board is happy that the religious ethos and characteristic spirit of the school is being promoted loyally and the work of the Sisters of Charity, who founded the school is being developed into the future. The motto of the school is "Caritas Christi Urget Nos".

The school is under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Achonry. The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the commitment of the Trustee to the school. The Board thanks the Trustee for his continued support and interest in the school.

The Board for its part strives to uphold the Catholic ethos of St. Joseph's and to fulfill the Mission Statement of the school.

### Mission Statement

"St. Joseph's Secondary School is a Christian community committed to educate students at secondary level in a caring atmosphere of honesty, sincerity, justice, mutual respect and tolerance in partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents and members of the wider community. The school strives to give every pupil the opportunity to develop his/her unique and special talents".

Signed by the Chairman on behalf of the Board of Management:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman of the Board of Management

