

Annual Report of the Board of Management to the Parents of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Foxford for the School Year 2008 – 2009

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.

1. School Enrolments and Staffing

School enrolments continued to grow with numbers now reaching 345 students at the time of writing this Report. (September 2009) There were 27 Whole time teacher equivalents (WTE's) permitted by the Department of Education and Science (D.E.S.) and there were 31 teachers on the staff. Three Special Needs Assistants, a full-time Secretary, a full-time Caretaker, a part-time Payroll Secretary and Contract 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 final year and it is chaired by Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Mulligan. A new Board will be elected in October 2009. 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. Liz McHale. 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 2008 – 2009.

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 signed by the School Trustee, Bishop Kelly in September 2009.

The accounts of the school are computerised and are operated on the TAS Books system. In the school year 2008 – 2009 the school operated on a small surplus. However, 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 2009-10. All of the education partners have been consulted in this matter.

4. Whole School Evaluation September 2008

A Whole School Evaluation was carried out in the school during the week commencing September 22nd. and it concluded on September 25th. The Report is available on www.education.ie under Inspection Reports February 2009. The general view of the education partners of the WSE is that the school has received an outstanding report, reflective of the excellent work which is undertaken on a daily basis with the support of an excellent staff, Parents, Board of Management, school management, Parents Council, Students' Council and the entire student population.

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 120 schools in the country (Irish Independent December 2008) for the percentage of its students who proceeded to Third Level in 2008 (86.4%).

Of particular mention this year was the outstanding achievement of Sinéad Reape, who won an All Ireland Scholarship, which was presented to her in the University of Limerick by the Minister for Education and Science, Mr. Batt O' Keefe and Mr. JP McManus.

This scholarship is worth nearly €7,000 per year of study.

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 2008-2009. The Board of Management acknowledges the participation of students, teachers, staff and parents in these activities.

There were notable victories in GAA, achievements in Basketball, both Girls and Boys which are commended.

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 Barcelona, the TY Pantomime 'Little Red Riding Hood', 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 a record number of projects in the Young Scientist Competition, the largest of any school in Mayo. There were significant achievements by the Transition Year students in the Mayo County Enterprise Board Enterprise Competition, where St. Joseph's was awarded Best Overall School.

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. Whilst this review is not complete, progress is noted in the areas of policies on mobile phones, the school uniform, the introduction of a school 'hoodie' and further clarifications on the Points System in the Code of Behaviour.

The Homework Policy was reviewed also and some practical alterations have been made to it.

The new Policy on SPHE was adopted by the Board. The School Safety Statement was also re-visited in October 2008 and many new amendments were made to it.

A constant feature of School Planning is the extensive activity of subject planning, which takes place regularly in the school. The Board notes that many subject plans are being updated regularly and it commends this approach.

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.

In May 2009, the Board received the good news of funding for an additional classroom to be built at the rear of the main school building. Planning permission has been granted and it is expected that this classroom will be built shortly.

The Board of Management is also seeking the appointment of a Music teacher in the school given the increasing number of pupils taking music in the school. This matter was pursued with DES in 2008 – 2009 and hours were granted.

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

