

Cumann na dTuismitheoirí

Scoil Aonghusa

Parents' Council

Comhdháil na Bliana, Aitheasc an Cathaoirligh

5 Samhain 2020

Fáilte

Ba mhaith liom fáilte mhór a chur roimh gach duine anseo anocht chuig Comhdháil na Bliana de Chumann na dTuismitheoirí Scoil Aonghusa. Is mise Yvonne Walsh agus is mé an Cathaoirleach.

Tá an-áthas orm an oiread daoine a fheiceail ar Zoom anocht!

Bhí chéad leath na bliana an-ghnóthach ag Cumann na dTuismitheoirí ag eagrú imeachtaí agus tiomsú airgid don scoil, ansin dhún an scoil i Mí Márta mar gheall ar Covid-19. Pléifimid agus roinnfimid leat le linn an chruinnithe.

Aitheasc an Chathaoirligh

I have two daughters in the school in Rang a dó and Rang na Naíonán Sóisir.

Last year was my second year as Chairperson of the Parents' Council, and what a year it has been! We are a relatively new family to the school just like some of you here tonight maybe attending an AGM for the first time. Attending Parents' Council meetings helps parents meet other parents from your child's class and to hear more about the school community and understand what a vital part the Parents Council plays in the school community.

The Parents' Council typically meet once a month. We have already met virtually for the first time in October. The first scheduled meeting was later in the year than normal, it was decided that getting children back to school safely and the new routines under the current circumstances took priority. Future dates for virtual meetings will be posted on the school website.

The Officers of the Council consists of myself as Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Gillian Burke Faulkner, Treasurer Susan Carr, Secretary Brenda Matthews and the National Parents Council Representative, Sinead Townsend, and other committee members.

Both the Treasurer and Secretary officer positions are open for nominations tonight as both Susan and Brenda have completed 3+ years in their respective roles. If anyone would like to nominate themselves for any of the roles, please contact the school office.

There are also two parents nominated by parents who serve on the Board of Management, Liam Harbison and Olivia Kierans, who were voted onto the Board earlier this year. What a year to be elected to the Board of Management, a year with incredibly significant changes to be implemented before the start of the new school term in September!

I would like to sincerely thank the previous parents' representatives on the Board of Management Olivia Shiel and Joe McArdle who served on the Board of Management for a number of years and also Rhona Kelly who was the Chairperson of the Board of Management for many years.

In the school we pride ourselves on our sense of community, the school being the Board of Management, the Parents Council, the teachers and staff, the children, and every parent/guardian in the school, even grandparents are included! One of the standout moments for me last year was the fantastic success of the annual Christmas raffle and helping and attending Scoil Aonghusa's famous Pancake day!

The Parents Council works hard to fundraise for the school. If we want our children to have anything extra and for the school to run as well as it does, funds need to be raised by the Parents' Council. All money we raise all goes back directly into the school. We transfer funds twice a year, as per best practice, to the school. We vote as a Committee what we would like the money raised to be spent on. It is always for the good of the children!

The annual Christmas raffle is our biggest fundraiser. We handed out letters to all local businesses surrounding the school looking for prize donations for the raffle. A letter was also sent out to parents asking for donations for the raffle. We organised raffle cards to be printed. The day of the raffle there is great excitement in the school and the anticipation on who will win the 1st prize!

1st prize were two premium Manchester United seats which were donated kindly by a family in the school. Last year we raised €5,775 in the Christmas raffle which was amazing!

We decided as a committee that the money raised by the Christmas Raffle would be spent on technology for the school. The school purchased a set of Chromebooks and training from some of the money transferred in January. The Parents Council directly bought a Chromebook trolley which stores and charges the Chromebooks.

We also have a permit for an annual flag day, the third Friday in February. It is not clear yet under current restrictions if we will be able to hold a flag day next year on Friday 19th February 2021. This year we had lots of families and pupils who volunteered an hour or so to collect on behalf of the school. It was so good to see so many pupils helping out on the day, the excitement of emptying the collection boxes into the counting machine! We raised a fantastic €1,138 which was a fantastic amount to raise as the weather was so wet!

The Parents Council also help to organise events for the children, which are always lots of fun!

In October the school held a Halloween themed story telling event in the leabharlann for Junior and Senior infants and on the success of that it was arranged to have a Christmas story telling event in the halla for these classes.

The children arrived at the school dressed in their PJ's full of excitement! Even some parents came in their PJ's to partake in the fun! We had a fireplace backdrop and a huge blow up Santa, his reindeer and snowman, which the children had great fun with.

After the Christmas story told by Múinteoir Catriona, every child got a hot chocolate and a cookie to enjoy then some Christmas carol singing as Gaeilge!

In February we had Pancake Tuesday! It is the most fantastic day in the school. If there is any day that you can take time off to attend an event in the school, it is Pancake Tuesday. There is so much joy in the children's faces. The smell of pancakes lingers in the halla for days! I would like to sincerely thank Breda Devine and all the parents who supplied batter, pancakes, and on the day cooked and served up what can only be described as a Pancake feast. This year's Pancake day was the last Pancake day for many of the helpers as their children were in 6th class. This was the last event in the school prior to the closure so looking back it was lovely that this class group got to share this experience and to take some class photos! It is doubtful if Pancake day will be held next year.

This year the school was due to have 1st Communion on May 23rd which was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid-19. To mark this day Múinteoir Edel arranged for some special gifts to be sent out to everyone in the class and there was a virtual ceremony held in St Peter's to mark the day. 1st confession was due to be held on March 12th which also had to be cancelled. 1st Communion finally got to go ahead on September 5th. Unfortunately, this year the usual cupán tae in the halla could not take place after the ceremony. Usually the Parents Council organise sandwiches, cakes and biscuits for all families and extended families to enjoy. Hopefully, the cupán tae will be back in the future!

We usually bought cakes from Coulter and Black with each child's name listed on the cake. The tradition is that each child receives a slice of the cake with their name on it the first school day after the ceremony is held. This year this tradition was altered slightly, each child received an individual cupcake with their name on it!

It was unfortunate that this year the Parents Council could not organise a group class photo. Several photos of pupils and their families were printed in the Drogheda Leader.

In June it was time to organise the book scheme. This is a huge benefit to families and takes away the need to source and purchase books during the summer holidays! But of course, this year the book scheme had to be organised differently! Each family opted into the book scheme by paying a €1 deposit through Way2pay then received their book list via e-mail and parents then advised the school which books they did not require purchased. The school's electronic payment and accounting application, Way2Pay was used for parents to pay for their book order. This removed all the risk of handling and collecting large sums of money and made the tracking and accounting of payments so streamlined and efficient. This was the ideal solution for today's virtual world!

The Parents Council supply all the other books and readers to rent for a small annual fee which saves expense on the back to school bill.

All the books when they arrived from Book Haven to the school were then individually labelled, grouped into classes and stored in the leabharlann for the start of the new year. A quite different process to previous years but overall, it worked very well!

A review of all returned rental books was also completed and many classes maths books were replaced. Funds specifically for books are kept in a separate account and are available for the school to upgrade or purchase books for the library and are available if there are updates to the curriculum.

At the end of the day, everything we do as a Parents Council is for the children. The more involved you are in the Council the more the children get out of it. The more they see you helping around the school the more joy they get out of it. They understand the value of the time you put into the school.

It is hard work at times but extremely rewarding! We always welcome new members for the Parents Council. If you would like to get involved this year, please let Deirdre or Múinteoir Edel know and they will put you in touch with members of the Parents Council Committee. There is also a helpers list if you are able to help at some events which we may get to organise this year.

It would be great to have representatives from each class on the Parents Council. Reminders for the virtual meetings will be sent prior to the meeting. If you have some ideas you might like to come to the school with, come to the Council and we can engage with the school.

Múinteoir Edel comes to all our meetings and we engage together to come up with new ideas and different ways to raise funds and plan events. This is so prevalent now as everything we do needs to be planned in line with Covid-19 regulations.

Also, thank you the Board of Management, especially the parent's nominees Liam and Olivia, you both had a quite a challenging start to your tenure on the Board of Management but you both excelled! To our Vice Chairperson Gillian, our treasurer Susan and Secretary Brenda and Deirdre the school secretary, go raibh mile mile maith agaibh!

Finally, a huge, big thank you to everyone currently on the Parents Council Committee and all who helped at the events and activities and helped us fund raise throughout the year. Without your help we would not be able to achieve as much as we do!

Thank you all so much for dialling in tonight and thank you to Edel, it has been great working with you all last year!

Táimid leis seo le chéile. Slán agus beannacht.

Le meas,
Yvonne Walsh
Cathaoirleach