

Cumann na dTuismitheoirí

Scoil Aonghusa

Parents' Council

Comhdháil na Bliana,
Aitheasc Chathaoirleach an Bhoird Bainistíochta, Seamus Finegan
5 Samhain 2020

Dia dhaoibh go léir, I would like to thank Cumann na dTuismitheoirí for the opportunity to address the AGM tonight – Cumann na dTuismitheoirí plays a vital role in assisting and supporting the Board of Management in carrying out one of its core functions which is to uphold the characteristic Catholic ethos of the school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh whereby the school's teachings are based on the morals of the Catholic Church; this ethos is also further defined and enhanced by the use and promotion of the Irish language as the primary medium of instruction and day-to-day communication and relating with each other in the school. When we look at the school website it is clearly stated that “We are a community of teachers, students and parents that strive to achieve the best results by working hand in hand with each other for the benefit of the pupils in our care. Above all else, we want our pupils to be happy and safe as they grow and learn.” While terms like ethos and characteristic spirit are often nebulous and hard to define, the ongoing work of Cumann na dTuismitheoirí (as evidenced for example from the minutes of last year's AGM which outlined the activities undertaken on behalf of and in support of the students in the school) provides a more than ample articulation of what the defining spirit of Scoil Aonghusa means in the daily life of the school. On behalf of the Board of Management, and by extension on behalf of the Patron, I would like to express a huge thanks to Cumann na dTuismitheoirí for your commitment to the ethos of the school and making it a genuinely fulfilling and stimulating lived experience. Despite the huge obstacles presented by the pandemic we will hear in tonight's reports and discussions about the ongoing work of Cumann na dTuismitheoirí since last year's AGM and I look forward to hearing about these, I know that the work and the activities have been somewhat curtailed but I also know that your interest,

enthusiasm and commitment to supporting and enhancing the educational experience for all the students has been undiminished. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

It is my honour to chair the Board of Management for its current term which began on 1st December 2019 and will expire on 30th November 2023. My relationship with the school stems from the fact that our three children attended Scoil Aonghusa between around 1995 and 2009. As you know, the Board is comprised of two representatives of the Patron, myself and Canon Eugene; two representatives from the community, John Halpin and Tara Walker; from the school the Príomhoide Edel and Múinteoir Mairead; and two representatives from the parents, Liam Harbison (who will address you a little later) and Olivia Kierans. The Board is constituted under the terms of The Education Act 1998 and its role is determined by the Governance Manual for Primary Schools, 2019 – 2023 published by the Department of Education and Skills. The foreword of this manual provides the Board with a guiding principle for all its work, viz. “The primary goal of a board of management is to ensure that the school is managed in a manner that provides all of its pupils with the best possible education.” As well as this document, which provides the Board with instructions and guidelines on carrying out its role and responsibilities, the Board is also supported and guided by the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA). In addition to circulars from the Department of Education and Skills we also draw on support from various representative bodies, the Diocesan Education Secretary and the Diocesan Advisor for Primary Religious Education. The Board, like yourselves Cumann na dTuismitheoirí, is comprised of people who voluntarily give of their time, energy and expertise to ensure the school is managed and supported in its work of educating our young people and I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Board for their contributions. Because of the pandemic a lot of the work of the Board since last March has focussed on dealing with the closure of the school and supporting the Príomhoide and the Múinteoirí in reopening and keeping the school opened since the beginning of the new school year (for example the Covid-19 Statement and Response Plan) but there has also been a lot of work in terms of reviewing various policies such as the Risk (Health & Safety) Assessment, the Anti-Bullying Policy, The Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment, the Acceptable Use Policy, the

Critical Incident Policy, the Data Protection Policy, the Admissions Policy and the School Self-Evaluation Report. The Board has a schedule of meetings drawn up for the school year and, in addition to the meeting which has already taken place on 21st September last we are also scheduled to meet on November 16th, January 25th, March 22nd, May 17th and June 21st.

Before I finish I would like to particularly note the gratitude of the Board to Múinteoir Edel, Múinteoir Mairead and all the teaching, learning support and ancillary staff who have worked so tirelessly since the start of the current “new normal” to ensure that the school continued to provide the children with the care and attention they needed to get through this hugely challenging time – I remember walking up to the gates of the school on March 12th last as the children were leaving with as many books and bags as they could carry and many, especially the little ones, clearly upset and distressed by what was unfolding before them with little or no understanding of what was to come. In conversation with Edel a little later it quickly became clear to me that she and the rest of the staff were determined to make the best of the situation and to ensure that, as far as possible, every child was going to continue their education not only in terms of the academic curriculum but also in terms of the care and nurturing of the individual. This goal was realised in spades, with the arrangements for the final farewell to the students of Rang 6 being an outstanding example. Over the period of closure and the summer months I was in awe of the time and effort expended by every member of the school community – I know for a fact (and despite my urgings to her to take a rest) that Edel had no break to speak of over the summer months and she deserves all our thanks for making sure we returned to a safe and a welcoming environment in September.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the Board’s gratitude to Cumann na dTuismitheoirí for all your work and for providing me, and by extension, the Board of Management, with this opportunity to talk to you. I would like to wish Cumann na dTuismitheoirí every success in the year to come in all the work it does on behalf of the school community.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

Seamus Finegan, Cathaoirleach an Bhoird Bainistíochta