

Rathmichael Parish National School Board of Management Report 2020-2021

‘Jesus said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.’

Mark 10: 14-16

Rathmichael Parish National School Board of Management’s role is to manage the school on behalf of the Patron, The Archbishop of Dublin, and is accountable to both the Patron and the Minister for Education. In carrying out this duty, the Board is obliged to consult with and keep the Patron informed of decisions and proposals of the Board. The Board is also accountable to the Patron for upholding and maintaining the school’s Church of Ireland spirit and faith. The Principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including the guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and is accountable for that management. The Principal reports to the Board at its regular meetings.

The Board consists of eight members: two patron’s representatives – The Revd Sean Hanily (Chairman & Rector of Rathmichael Parish) & Mrs Lily Byrne (Honourary Treasurer); the school Principal – Ms Caroline Senior; two parents’ representatives – Mrs Frances Marshall & Mr Ken Miller; two community representatives – Mr John Bolton & Mr Roy Parker; and the school staff representative – Mrs Susan Crammond. With regard to their participation in the Board’s business, all Board members are encouraged to share their specific areas of personal expertise, in order to enhance the overall welfare of the whole school community.

The Board met six times in the last school year to address various fixed and variable agenda items. These usually include Correspondence, Finance, Health and Safety, Child Protection, Ancillary Staff, Policies, and Maintenance, as well as other matters arising. Meetings always open with prayer. The Principal reports to the Board on the day-to-day running and progress of the school and its community, as well as on any current or ongoing issues. The Principal’s report is incorporated into the minutes of each meeting. This year, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Board held its meetings via Zoom.

The Board aims to adopt a child-centred approach to all of its work. Child Protection and Anti-bullying are fixed items on the agenda for each Board meeting. Any specific cases of concern are addressed with due deference to the privacy of those involved. An oversight report is prepared and presented at each meeting.

The Hon. Treasurer reports at each meeting on income and expenditure. Planned expenditure is generally discussed at length. The Board, in its obligation of stewardship to its use of taxpayers’ money via State grants, as well as the voluntary contribution from families in the school community, has a duty of responsibility to its efficient use of resources; its accountability to students, parents and the community; and the public interest in the affairs of the school.

The Board has the accounts of both the Board and the PTA audited externally each year and these are sent to the Department of Education & Skills.

As well as the day to day financial requirements of the school, the Hon. Treasurer and Principal manage the various grants which are awarded to the school and report on these to the Board.

The school has an extensive set of policies which form an integral part of the day-to-day management. Most are based on prescribed departmental requirements and are tailored to suit our school community within those frameworks. Board meetings usually involve the review of one or more policies as regular updates are required. This year the Board adopted policies in relation to:

- Covid 19
- Covid Response Plan
- Covid Risk Assessment
- Covid Remote-teaching plan
- School Well-being
- Social Media

As well as the above, the Child Protection Policy, Discipline Policy, Complaints Procedure and Anti-Bullying Policy were reviewed over the course of the year.

The enrolment time of year (November and the run-up to it) continues to be a busy time due to the heavy administrative workload involved. Admissions are discussed at a special Board meeting in November. In 2020 the Board approved the final intake, ensuring that selections were in accordance with the admissions policy.

A fixed item on each Board meeting agenda is that of 'Ancillary Staff'. Our School Secretary, Caretaker and Cleaning Staff are crucial to the successful running of the school and all of them do exceptional work.

Staffing and recruitment are essential matters also overseen by the Board. There were two retirements from our staff this year: Ms Jackie Morris and Mrs Rosemary Alison. We thank them both for their significant and substantial contribution to this school over many years, and wish them God's blessing in retirement. As well as these retirements, Ms Claire Goudie has taken a career break.

Due to the vacancies, interviews were held to appoint new members of staff. The Board appointed Mrs Aoife Harte and Ms Sorcha Tully to permanent posts, and Ms Abigail Weller to a fixed-term post.

Maintenance is a regular and ongoing concern of the Board. This year's projects included new door-stops for the corridors to prevent people touching door surfaces due to concerns around the pandemic. Maintenance was also carried out on the pitch and the flat roofing.

Due to the pandemic various aspects of school-life had to be taken into consideration before the return to school. The Board supported the role of online-education by the staff from January to mid-March. The Board continues to oversee the adherence to pandemic-related guidelines which come from the HSE and Department.

Neil Banks stepped up as Chairperson of the Board following Revd Fred Appelbe's retirement, in 2019. I would like to thank him for all his support and hard work over this time. He has been part of the Board of Management for 14 years. He put many hours into policies and paperwork that was involved. He will be missed and we wish him the very best for the future.

The Board of Management would like to thank the PTA for their ongoing support and generosity of spirit in partnering with us on several projects, and without whom we would not have so many extra incentives for our school community. We also thank our team of teachers and ancillary staff, without whose diligence and devoted work this school could not maintain its esteemed reputation.

I would personally like to thank each of the Board members for their generosity of time, effort and wise council during a year in which they contributed in a challenging, and hopefully rewarding, voluntary role.

‘And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.’

Romans 8: 28

Yours in Christ,

Sean Hanily