

Portmarnock Community School

Board of Management 2004 -2007

Significant Achievements:

The Board of Management has presided over a period of change and has seen the introduction of significant developments in the governance of the school. In the initial stages both an Admission's Policy and a Code of Behaviour were drawn up. Following on from this, and using the appointment of a new Principal as a time for reflection, a review of the school's ethos and culture was undertaken. Guided by Noel Canavan, from the Marion Institute, staff, parents and students were interviewed. The findings would provide direction for the whole school over the next five years.

It was agreed that the Board would have to agree a statement outlining its Educational Philosophy. This it did. While this was being drawn up, work on other policies was put on hold. Having agreed its statement work on policies continued and the Board produced Religious Education, Student Anti-Bullying, Substance Misuse and Homework Policies.

While the Board had embarked upon its own review, which included at its core the role of its Joint Trustees, it understood, from other schools' Whole School Evaluations, that Boards of Management were being challenged about what they did to uphold the mission/charters of their respective Trustees.

Again the agreed statement of its educational philosophy helped the Board to reflect on this challenge. The statement points out that "its joint trustees complement each other very well sharing the values of -respect, justice, freedom, sincerity, joy and love – with not only an overall commitment to excellence but in 2007 committed to engaging a multi-cultural and/or multi faith school community as envisaged by Mary Ward or as the County of Dublin VEC states in its charter 'students irrespective of economic circumstances, gender, religious or philosophical outlook, race or social situation are welcome to join us in the pursuit of knowledge'."

In practical terms the Board has never had to turn away any student.. In prioritising work on the above policies Portmarnock Community School was in a position to uphold the main priorities of its joint trustees. In terms of 'standing with those on the margin of society' the Board agreed to the Transition Year project in South Africa. In order to 'provide a holistic education' the Board was delighted to extend the range of extra-curricular activities and support the introduction of a Musical into the school calendar.

The school 'strives for excellence in providing a holistic education, i.e. religious, academic, cultural, physical, psychological and social.' This required the Board to look

at the physical building in which this was to happen. Over the last number of years it has engaged with the Department of Education's Summer Work's Scheme and has seen such projects as the a) refurbishment of the school's Science Laboratories, b) partial replacement of windows, c) re-wiring of school d) upgrade of fire alarm system undertaken. In addition, under various schemes, the Woodwork and Technology/Engineering room have been upgraded to meet current Health and Safety requirements. To ensure that the school is accessible to all, a Disability Toilet was installed. To improve the learning environment the school's flooring was replaced with all corridors and compounds painted.

In terms of ensuring 'excellence' in teaching the school participated fully in Department of Education ICT projects, consequently all rooms have been equipped with broadband. The teaching of new subjects like Design and Communication Graphics has been facilitated by the provision of a new computer room.

Learning Support was another area looked at and a new room was provided to facilitate Resource Teaching and ESL.

Financial support from parents was used to provide a new Oratory and refurbishment of the school library.

With the refurbishment of the Science Laboratories and Library it was decided to employ extra personnel so as to maximise their potential, hence a full time Librarian and a part-time Laboratory Assistant were taken on.

Having equipped our classrooms with broadband we investigated the best way of exploiting this resource. A staff member was completing his masters in e-learning and he brought to our attention the benefits of 'Moodle'. It was agreed to pilot its introduction in the year 2007/2008. This involved the purchase of Data Projectors and Laptop Computers for those teachers wishing to participate in the project. It was also hoped that this might provide the basis for our ICT policy and subsequent submission to the DES for funding under their new scheme. With increased use of ICT in the school it was decided to source somebody who could provide immediate IT support when required.

The Future:

Policies. Work continues in this area. The School's Record Keeping Policy is ready for ratification, while groups have been formed to look at the drawing up of an Extra-Curricular, Pastoral Care, Career Guidance and Special Needs Policies. This again is driven by the findings of our ethos and culture review.

School Buildings. There are several challenges ahead. DES figures would suggest that enrolments in the Portmarnock area will rise requiring a school catering for 1000 places.

In its report it suggested that Portmarnock Community School would be able to provide for this. However PCS was built originally for 800 students. Accommodation for extra numbers was through the provision of 'temporary' accommodation nearly twenty years ago. In order to cater for what we have, at present enrolment is 980 students, and for the future the Board need to enter into negotiations with the DES for improved accommodation. This issue could become more acute if plans for the new runway go ahead as it would have a direct impact on the school.

In keeping with the joint trustees' desire to provide a holistic education for the students in their care it was agreed to look into the possibility of providing extra PE and Drama/Music facilities. An architect has been asked to come back with the outline of a project for the new Board of Management. The Parents Association have already agreed to support such a project.

Outside agencies will have an impact on the work of the Board, e.g. the NEWB will require an audit of the School's Code of Behaviour. Special Needs Provision is also another area which may provide a challenge for the school

Counselling. Management is investigating the possibility of acquiring outside Psychological Services to help support Career Guidance and Counselling in the school.