



# SCOIL FIONNTÁIN NAOFA

## Agreed Report of the Board of Management 15th November 2023

**Living our Ethos:** Johnny Watson as Religious Education co-ordinator reported under this heading:

- An Enrolment Ceremony for pupils who will be making the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation took place on Sunday, the 17th of September in Saint Brigid's Church, Shanahoe. This was celebrated by Parish Priest Fr. Paddy Byrne and all children from 2nd, 5th and 6th Class and their families were in attendance on the day;
- Each classroom has been assigned a month to create artwork for the Church based on Religious Feast Days or particular themes. The infant and Sonas room created artwork to reflect the Harvest and this was displayed during the month of September;
- The Middle room learned about St Therese of Lisieux and created artwork relating to St. Therese that was displayed in the church for the month of October;
- The Senior Room created a '*Remembrance Garden*' for the month of November remembering those who have passed away. For the month of December, all classrooms will create art work to reflect the theme of the nativity;
- Fr. Petru has kindly agreed to celebrate mass with the school on the first Wednesday of every month. The first mass took place on Wednesday the 4th October. The school choir sings at the beginning and end of Mass. Mr. Watson's class read during the mass in October and Mrs. Cahill's read during November's mass. All parents/guardians and family members are welcome to attend each mass;
- There will be a Christmas mass on Tuesday, the 19th of December in Saint Brigid's Church. This will be celebrated by Fr. Petru. There will be readings, music and prayers during this mass.
- '*Catholic Schools Week*' will take place from Monday 22nd January to Friday 26th January.

## **Treasurer's Report**

In the absence of the Treasurer Agnes Kerwin, the treasurer's report was read by Chairperson Micheál Delaney:

Monthly income and expenditure reports for the months of September and October 2023 were circulated. The tractor run on Sunday 1st October was a very successful event for the school and an occasion for all the local community to be involved in.

### **Financial Year 2022/2023**

The annual accounts for the Financial Year 2022/2023 were emailed to McMahon Auditors and Accountants Limited, Kildare Town this week and supporting documentation was delivered to their offices by hand. McMahon's have advised that they plan to begin work on our school accounts next week. Follow up questions on the accounts can be expected over the next few weeks and the final version of the accounts will be submitted to the Financial Support Services Unit before the deadline at the end of February 2024.

### **Second Special Class**

The news of the opening of the second special class was well received by the Board of Management. However, the board was unanimous in stating that the proper accommodation must be in place in advance of the class opening as there is absolutely no surplus accommodation in the school currently. In fact, the Board of Management went out to state that the class cannot open at the end of August 2024 unless the proper accommodation is in place. Following patron approval, Barry Whelan and Michéal Delaney submitted an application for Additional Accommodation to the Buildings Section of the Department of Education on Friday, 10th November and the department have confirmed receipt of same. Barry Whelan will liaise with them again over the coming days for a progress report regarding the application.

## **Principal's Report**

The Principal's Report to the Board of Management was given by Barry Whelan.

### **Child Safeguarding**

- The Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) was given by Barry Whelan;
- The Board of Management formally adopted the '*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools-revised 2023*'. They were proposed for adoption by Johnny Watson and seconded by Mary Dunphy. A copy of these procedures was forwarded to/shared with all Board of Management members at the start of September. All staff were provided with the revised procedures in advance of them officially coming into effect on 1st September 2023;
- The Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment that was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 24th August 2023 is:
  - (a) on display inside the main entrance of the school;
  - (b) posted on the school website  
<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/child-safeguarding-statement--risk-assessment.html>has
  - (a) been shared with staff, parents and the patron;In turn, the Patron, Staff, Parents' Association and general parent body have been informed of/about the Annual Review of the Child Safeguarding Statement using Mandatory Template 3  
<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/child-safeguarding-annual-review.html>
- Both Barry Whelan (Principal) and Johnny Watson (Deputy Principal) have revised their Child Safeguarding training for Designated Liaison Persons and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons respectively using the Oide/PDST E-Learning Programme for DLPs and DDPLs. The revised training is in line with the provisions of '*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools-revised 2023*'.
- All staff are this week completing the '*Children First E-Learning Programme*'. There is a new version specifically for mandated persons and all teaching staff are completing this.
- Barry Whelan has liaised with '*Stay Safe Services*' in '*Cherry Orchard*' to provide Child Safeguarding training for the new Board of Management when it comes into effect in December 2023. This training with Seán O'Casaide (who facilitated training for the current board in March 2022) is scheduled to take place on Monday, 11th December;
- The '*Stay Safe Programme*' will be taught in its entirety on return to school after the Christmas holidays e.g in January 2024 as per

our two year cycle for the teaching of different S.P.H.E topics as outlined in the Whole School Plan for S.P.H.E;

- The '*Stay Safe Rules*' are reinforced in all classes on an ongoing basis and posters are on display throughout the school outlining the rules.

### Anti-Bullying

- An Anti-Bullying Report was given by Barry Whelan;
- The Annual Review of the Anti-Bullying Policy using the checklist/Appendix 4 from the '*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*' (2013) was undertaken at this Board of Management meeting. Barry Whelan thanked the board for their input on the review of the policy in advance of the meeting. Notification of the Annual Review can be found here <https://shanahoens.weebly.com/anti-bullying-policy-annual-review.html>
- '*Anti-Bullying Week*' is taking place this week in the school e.g 13th to 17th November and the key messages of our Anti-Bullying Policy are being reinforced across all classes;
- Four out of five of our teachers are now trained in Restorative Practice approaches having availed of training in same in conjunction with Laois Education and Support Centre since October 2022. It is hoped that the one remaining teacher will be able to avail of training in Laois Education and Support Centre in the coming months.

### Sustained Support for Gaeilge with Oide

- Following an application submitted to the PDST by Barry Whelan last year (2022-2023), we were granted sustained support for Gaeilge with Oide for the school year 2023-2024. Oide advisor Teresa Coffey has undertaken two full day visits to us so far in this school year (2023-2024) and all teachers have found these advisory visits to be very beneficial;
- The School Improvement Plan for Gaeilge has been updated by Johnny Watson following the initial visit from Teresa Coffey, as outlined above.

### English

- The Whole School Plan for English has been reviewed by Kris Cahill (AP2) who has responsibility for English as a subject area following the plan being in place for one school year e.g 2022-2023;

- The School Self-Evaluation Report and School Improvement Plan for English has been finalised by Kris Cahill.

### Maths Curriculum

- Barry Whelan attended a full day's Leader's Seminar on the Primary Maths Curriculum on Wednesday, 18th October in Laois Education and Support Centre and found it to be very worthwhile;
- Board of Management approval was sought for a school closure on Thursday, 14th December for teacher inservice in the new Primary Maths Curriculum in Laois Education and Support Centre. This approval was granted by the board.
- The SSE Report and School Improvement Plan for Maths was updated by Barry Whelan in October following consultation with the staff and was shared with teachers and parents at the end of October;
- Barry Whelan and Johnny Watson attended training on the use of IZAK9 Cubes for problem solving in Maths on Wednesday 15th November. This is part of a Transition Programme that Barry Whelan is on the sub-committee for in Laois Education and Support Centre. The programme aims to use IZAK9 Cubes as a bridging resource between Primary and Post-Primary and Scoil Fionntáin Naofa is linked to Mountrath Community School and six other primary schools in its catchment area for this purpose. 5th and 6th Class pupils and their teachers in the seven cluster schools together with the Transition Year Students in Mountrath Community School and their co-ordinator and Maths teacher will be involved in the project. Following on from the initial training that took place on 15th November, the sequence of a events over the coming school year will be as follows:
  - (a) Day 2: This will be an online training session focused on expanding teachers' knowledge on the use of IZAK9, possibly on topics/tasks that teachers may have been involved in identifying/highlighting as being most relevant to them;
  - (b) Day 3 for Post-Primary: This will be for Post-Primary schools and will be an IZAK9 online live session for TY Maths teachers and students held in their own classes. This gives them an experience of participating in a hands-on Maths event as well as modelling how to support the Primary pupils on Day 4, as outlined below. It is envisaged that up to 10 TY students from each Post-Primary school will train here.
  - (c) Day 3 for Primary: This will be for primary schools and will be an IZAK9 online live session for primary pupils in their own classes to familiarise them with using IZAK9 tasks similar to what will be used

on day 4. It is hoped that schools will use the cubes in their own classes also in the run-up to the Day 4 event.

- (d) Day 4: This will be a major IZAK9 LIVE face-to-face event. Primary pupils will visit the Post-Primary schools in their cluster and join their TY Maths teachers and students for a live session. All pupils from all clusters will participate simultaneously at their Post-Primary venues. IZAK9 will facilitate tasks from the whiteboard. Primary pupils will work in groups, supported by TY students, to complete tasks in a rich, fun-filled, shared learning environment. This day will also support pupils with the transition to post-primary in the process, allowing pupils build relationships with their primary school peers from other schools and also get to know some of the TY students involved in the project, hopefully reducing any anxiety around the transition.

### Geography

- We received notification on Friday last (10th November) that we will have a Curriculum Evaluation in Geography with our school inspector Ms. Orla Sheeran on Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st November. The purpose of the visit is to evaluate teaching and learning in Geography as a subject area. Ms. Sheeran will be in the school for two days in total and will visit the three mainstream classrooms and the Sonas Class to inspect teaching and learning in Geography. As part of the evaluation, Ms. Sheeran will conduct a short focus group with the pupils in 5th and 6th Class. She will also meet with Barry Whelan as Principal and the person responsible for co-ordinating Geography as a subject area in the school. As in all inspections, the inspector will monitor and report on compliance with key aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary schools (2023)* and on the extent to which schools are implementing the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2013)*.
- 5th & 6th Class have been registered to take part in the 'Blue Star' project on the EU again this year.
- To develop our work on the 'Blue Star Project' as outlined above, Barry Whelan (Principal) and Johnny Watson (Deputy Principal and 5th & 6th Class Teacher) are part of a working group presently within Laois Education and Support Centre who are making an application to participate in the 'Jean Monnet EU Learning Initiative for Schools'. The aims of the initiative include (a) empowering teachers to teach about the EU using engaging methods and to bring facts and knowledge about the European Union to their learners (b) improving learning outcomes in relation to EU

matters(c)strengthening EU literacy and (d)creating an interest in the EU which will constitute a basis to enhance the participation of pupils in democratic processes and leave them better equipped to become active citizens.

### SESE: Science

- We have submitted our application for a '*Curious Minds*' Platinum Award for STEM for the school year 2023-2024;
- Una Halpin from '*Curious Minds*' has been assigned to work with us as a facilitator for the duration of this school year to support us in our work towards achieving a Platinum award;
- Barry Whelan had a Zoom meeting with Una on Friday, 13th October to discuss the platinum award application;
- We have selected Digital Learning/Technology as the main focus for our platinum award for 2023-2024 as it integrates very well with our Digital Learning plan formulated by Johnny Watson and rolled out at the start of this school year. In that regard, Barry Whelan and Johnny Watson worked collaboratively on the Pre-Platinum Application which was submitted on 27th October;
- It is Science Week this week (13th to 17th November inclusive) and pupils across all classes are involved in undertaking different experiments and investigations;
- 5th & 6th Class will go on a whole day visit to Castlecomer Discovery Park which is an approved Science Foundation Ireland Centre on Wednesday 29th November. The learner experiences that they will be involved in include Creative Map Making, a Nature Trail and Scavenger Hunt and Woodland Bug Detectives.

### The Arts

- In line with our cyclical review of curricular plans and policies, Barry Whelan is in the process of reviewing the Whole School Plans for Visual Arts and Drama respectively in consultation and collaboration with the staff. These whole school plans should be ready for ratification by the Board of Management at the December meeting of the Board.
- Following our award of a '*Blast Artist in Residency*' from Laois Education and Support Centre for the school year 2023-2024, the pupils in 2nd to 4th Class are currently working with professional artist and ceramicist Monica O'Meara to explore the theme of biodiversity through the medium of clay. This integrates very well with our application for a Green Flag for biodiversity for the school year 2023-2024, which is currently ongoing.;

- All teachers are very satisfied with the new '*Dabbledoo*' programmes for Drama and Music and feel that engagement in and with same has refreshed and enhanced learner experiences for pupils in both subject areas.

### Student Council

- The Student Council us now also acting as '*wellbeing warriors*' for the '*Amber Flag*' initiative which aims to create healthy, inclusive environments that support mental well-being. Barry Whelan made an application for '*Amber Flag*' status in September;
- The Student Council are continuing with their fortnightly wellbeing focus and to date this year, they have promoted restorative practices and random acts of kindness;
- The Student Council are reinforcing Anti-Bullying messages across the school this week to coincide with Anti-Bullying Week;
- They also organised and promoted the '*Trick or Treat for Temple Street Fundraiser*' and the '*Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal*'.

### Green Schools

Updates provided by Mrs. Cahill:

- Since September 2023, we have agreed and received parental permission to schedule our meetings before school every second Monday. This allows for less disruption of class work to facilitate meetings;
- We carried out a clean-up of the school grounds, (whole school effort) including digging out the vegetable garden and covering it to prevent/slow down regrowth of weeds;
- We have held a slogan competition for biodiversity;
- Signs and posters are displayed across all rooms in the school promoting Green Schools ideas and teachings;
- Signs have been put in place at all taps reminding children to watch out for leaks and make sure all taps are fully turned off;
- Signs for light switches are currently being created to remind children/staff to turn off lights when not required;
- We are working on updating our display board to include items of interest across all Green Schools flags earned to date;
- We are holding a Christmas clear out event. To honour our pledge to '*Reduce, Reuse and Recycle*', we have decided to gather toys and clothes for our local St. Vincent De Paul shop. We hope that some deserving families will benefit from our donations at Christmas.



## Green Schools plans going forward:

- Our parent and Community representatives Tony Walsh and Sarah-Lou Malone intend to work on our Willow tunnel and Dome to “tidy them up” and reshape them. Any leftover willow may be used to show the children how to weave willow;
- In Spring/Summer we intend to develop a rockery area. This will provide insects with another habitat to enjoy;
- We intend for the whole school to make an “Energy Pledge”. This involves creating an awareness at a whole school level of conserving energy and promising to take responsibility to take ownership of overseeing more care and attention throughout the school community of turning off lights and conserving heat in the school building

## Active Schools

### Updates provided by Mr. Watson:

- All pupils are engaging in ‘*Walk on Friday*’ every Friday morning around the school grounds. ‘*Funky Friday*’ also takes place during small break and lunch time where music is played through the speaker system;
- Our first ‘*Feel Good Friday*’ of this academic year was held on Friday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of October. We started the day with a ‘*Spooky Walk*’, followed by a ‘*Wake up Shake up*’ session with Eleanor Merriman. At 10:00, Mr. Watson, the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> classes and the Active Flag committee organised fun Halloween playground games for all of the classes.
- Tag Rugby will take place every Tuesday for the month of November. This is facilitated by Bryan Croke from Leinster Rugby. The infant room and the Sonas room have the opportunity to be involved in tag based games while the Middle and Senior room will learn the skills of Tag Rugby which tie in the Fundamental Movement Skills that we will be focusing on over the course of this year as part of the PE curriculum and the Active Flag initiative;
- Cumann na mBunscol: The finals for both the boys and the girls Cumann na mBunscol football teams will take place in the week of the 20<sup>th</sup> of November in O’ Moore Park. The girls are in the Championship final against Maryborough N.S while the boys take on Borris-in-Ossory in the Shield Final. We are still awaiting confirmation of time and dates for both matches. We wish both teams the very best of luck in their respective finals;
- *The ‘Active Break Every Day Challenge’* began on Monday the 13<sup>th</sup>

of November. Teachers are encouraged to include ‘*Active Breaks*’ throughout the day to reduce Sedentary time. Videos have been provided by ‘*Olympic Ireland*’ and these will be shown each day by the class teacher.

- ‘*Feel Good Friday*’ is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023. The emphasis this day will be placed on Table Tennis.
- There will be a slogan competition for the Active Flag which will be completed by all classes. The closing date for entries to Active Flag Ireland is the 1<sup>st</sup> of December

### S.P.H.E/Friends for Life

Barry Whelan is currently undertaking ‘*Fun Friends*’ and ‘*Friends for Life*’ training with NEPS. These are school-based anxiety prevention and resilience building programmes developed by Dr. Paula Barrett in Australia. The World Health Organisation cites ‘*Friends for Life*’ as the only evidence-based programme for anxiety in children that is effective at all levels of intervention (WHO, 2004). Friends programmes helps students to develop resilience by teaching them effective strategies to cope with, problem solve and manage all kinds of emotional distress, including worry, stress, change and anxiety. Skills learned throughout the programme help students both now and in later life. The programme can be run by teachers as a whole class programme, or as a small group intervention.

### Parent Teacher Meetings

Parent Teacher Meetings for Infants to 6th Class will take place on Tuesday 21st to Thursday 23rd November from 2:50p.m to 4:50p.m daily.

### Parents’ Association

The Parents’ Association held their AGM on 12th September. The following parents were elected as officers:

- Chairperson: Niamh Kelly;
- Secretary: Gene Butler;
- Treasurer: Aisling Gormley

The Parents’ Association Plan to hold an Easter Raffle with excellent prizes namely a family voucher for Centre Parcs and a €500. Super Value voucher. The proceeds of this fundraiser will go towards purchasing new levelled readers for our pupils. Board of Management approval was sought for this fundraiser and was granted.

### Road Safety Workshop

The pupils will have a Road Safety Workshop on Monday, 27th November with Nicola Walsh from 'Road Safety Ireland'.

### Author's Visit

Mrs. Cahill has organised for children's author Peter Grogan to visit the school on 1st December.

### Midterm Maintenance

Many thanks to Chairperson Micheál Delaney and Willie Delaney for replacing slates that had come loose on the old school building during a storm in early October and for clearing out gutters over the October midterm break

### **School Self-Evaluation (SSE)**

Barry Whelan informed the board that School Improvement Plans and School Self-Evaluation Reports for

(a)Gaeilge, (b)English, (c)Maths, (d)Science and (e)Digital Learning are now in place within the school. These have also been shared with parents via the school website.

The school has commenced engagement with the SSE Process for Wellbeing as per the provisions of the '*Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*'. Johnny Watson has made an application for support to Oide for this process.

### **Curricular Plans**

The following curricular plans were ratified by the Board of Management:

(a)English

<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/english-whole-school-planpolicy.html>

(b)Assessment

<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/assessment-policy.html>

### **Organisational and Administrative Policies**

The following Organisational and Administrative Policies were ratified by the Board of Management:

(a)Anti-Bullying

<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/anti-bullyinh-policy.html>

Policy

(b) Critical Incident Management Plan  
<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/critical-incident-manangement-plan.html>

(c) Acceptable Use Policy for ICT  
<https://shanahoens.weebly.com/anti-bullyinh-policy.html>

### **Board of Management 2019-2023**

Chairperson Micheál Delaney expressed his thanks to the outgoing Board of Management for their support for and commitment to the school over the course of the last four years. He thanked in particular the outgoing members who will not serve on the new Board of Management including Anne Rice, Agnes Kerwin and David Bergin. He also expressed thanks to former secretary to the Board of Management and School Principal Richie Connor and former Deputy Principal and Teacher Nominee on the Board of Management Miriam Brickley who were both on the board when it came into effect in December 2019.

### **Board of Management 2023-2027**

Chairperson Micheál Delaney outlined that the new Board of Management for 2023-2027 would be coming into effect on the 1st December 2023 and in line with the provisions of the '*Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2023-2027*', the following members had been elected to serve on the new Board of Management:

1. Chairperson and Patron's Nominee: Micheál Delaney;
2. Patron's Nominee: Sharon Drennan;
3. Principal/Secretary: Barry Whelan;
4. Teacher Nominee: Jonathan (Johnny) Watson;
5. Parent Nominee: James Kirwan;
6. Parent Nominee: Sonia McDonnell;
7. Community Nominee: Mary Dunphy;
8. Community Nominee: Sarah-Louise Malone.

Chairperson Micheál Delaney and Secretary to the Board of Management/School Principal Barry Whelan will attend Board of Management training being organised by the diocese in Portlaoise next week.

**AOB**

Under the heading of AOB, Chairperson Michéal proposed a vote of sympathy to the Drennan Family of Clonban on the passing of their mother Mary (RIP) who was a long serving member of the Board of Management of Scoil Fionntáin Naofa. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

### **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting of the Board of Management of the school/the first meeting of the incoming Board of Management 2023-2027 will be on Monday, 4th December

**ENDS**



