



An Augustinian School

**Principals Report to the Board of Management
(BOM) on the operation and performance of
Good Counsel College.**

1 September 2015 to 31 August 2016.



SEPTEMBER 1, 2016
GOOD COUNSEL COLLEGE
New Ross

Introduction

This report has been prepared to comply with section 20 of the Education Act, 1998. It covers the period from 1 September 2015 to 31 August 2016. It was approved at a Board of Management meeting on 19 September 2016.

The next report will issue in autumn 2016.

Total enrolment

818 students were enrolled in the school in 2015/2016.

Spiritual development

A variety of services and liturgies took place during the year, as follows: Start-of-Year Mass, Graduation Mass for 6th year students, 1st Year Welcome Mass. Retreats for 5th year students. Weekly mass for each year group. Our 5th years also participated in their annual retreat.

Members of the Augustinian Schools Trust attended the San Diego AVI. Ms Sharon Furlong, Ms Andrea Swan and Ms Helen Bolger will attend the Tulsa, Oklahoma AVI in October 2016. This provides an opportunity to reflect and share good practice in promoting Augustinian Values.

The Chaplain, Fr Collender, has worked throughout 2015/16 to develop a lay Eucharistic team. The response from staff has been very positive and is to be commended.

Two of our 5th years supported pilgrims on the Ferns Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes this year.

The school's Religious Education department was greatly assisted by our chaplains, Fr. Michael Collender and Ms Helen Bolger.

Charity and Social Awareness

Students and staff raised over €10,000 for the following charities:

Cycle Against Suicide, Donal Walsh Live Life Foundation, Aware and the Irish Heart foundation. Food drives were also run for St Vincent de Paul.

Academic

Excellent results were achieved by the students taking the Leaving Certificate. Very impressive results were also achieved by the school's Junior Certificate students in 2016. Over 90% of our 2015/16 cohort transferred to 3rd level education with a number of 3rd level scholarships also achieved, most notably Daire McGrath who was awarded a Naughton Scholarship for STEM subjects.

A detailed subject-by-subject analysis completed by Mr. O'Brien (Principal) and Mr Aidan O'Brien (Deputy Principal) reveals that the levels of attainment by Good Counsel College, New Ross students in state examinations in 2016 were, once again, considerably above the national average. This analysis is shared with the school's subject departments, BOM and Parents' Council.

The school rejoices in the academic success of all students. The BOM congratulates all students and their teachers on the continued excellence of results in the school while encouraging all to focus on the potential for continued improvement.

Supervised Study was organised throughout the year and was availed of by an average of 90 students each evening. Supervised late study for Leaving Certificate students was availed of by over 45 students from 6:30pm to 9:30pm. A pilot Homework Club was launched in late April 2014 and proved successful. This targets students in need of assistance with homework. This was rolled out again from October 2015 and will support targeted students throughout 2016/17.

A WSE was carried out in October 2016. Links to its findings and recommendations can be found on the DES and school's websites.

2015/2016 saw the continuation of a Spanish exchange programme. A number of Spanish Students joined classes in GCC on a short 6 week block. Two students spent their entire academic year with us. This was a mutually positive experience for the Spanish students and our students.

The BOM is particularly keen to thank the teachers for their considerable work and enthusiasm in supporting these exchanges.

Staffing

The school's total teacher allocation from the DES for 2015/2016 was 57.4.

Of this total, 6.13 was set aside for students with special educational needs under the overall co-ordination of the school's Learning Support teachers, Ms Sheila Doyle and Ms Brigid Kennedy.

The school was granted 7 full-time Special Needs Assistant positions for 2015/2016 and 2016/17.

Mr George Dunbar retired from his teaching positions on 4th January 2016. He is thanked sincerely for his contribution to the school over such a long period of time.

Information Technology (I.T.)

The Eportal system continues to monitor the daily attendance and punctuality of all students. Daily text alerts were sent to the parents of students who did not register their attendance in school. Additionally, text alerts were sent to notify parents of certain school events e.g. dates of parent meetings, students leaving state examinations early. The school also updates its Twitter feed and website on a regular basis. This Eportal system was upgraded, which involved installing a new server in the staffroom, in July 2016 and will eventually be made accessible to parents.

All teacher laptops were repaired/upgraded. Speakers were installed/serviced in all classrooms to accentuate the use of Digital Projectors as a teaching tool. 25 new machines were installed in the new DCG room as part of the Villanova extension. A new server has also been installed here to complement the existing DCG suite. It must be noted that year on year the cost of maintaining, not enhancing, our IT infrastructure is placing a greater burden on our limited finances.

A new whole school photocopying and print management system was installed during the 2015/16 year in an effort to reduce waste paper. It has been decided from 2016/17 onwards that teachers will not collect money from students to cover copying costs. This was collected from parents as a once off charge during registration days as requested by the parents' council.

All Transition Year students studied for the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) information technology qualification as well as studying scratch programming as a module.

A coding Club continued on Friday afternoons from 4:15 to 5:15 with the support of Mr Trevor Murphy of Alignment Tech. 18 students, from across all year groups, attended this course and feedback is positive. The course will be offered again in 2015/16 but will be taught by Ms Aoife Sutton during lunch breaks.

Capital Development

Construction began in December 2015 on the extension to Villanova. This was completed in September 2016. The extension will increase our capacity to offer Technology, DCG and TG. This was reflected in the uptake of the subjects.

The new ASD Unit will accommodate 12 boys and its target date for completion is December 2016. It should be noted that the funding of €20,000 from the DES to fit out this building with equipment and furniture is significantly below what is required.

The Board of Management is truly delighted with this latest development and is most appreciative of all who have helped along the way.

Security fencing was installed at Cascia and at the 1st year prefabs to alleviate the level of trespass onto the school grounds out of hours. The security cameras, security alarms will require significant capital investment. The Fire Alarm System continues to cause problems, particularly out of hours. The most recent fire drill was held in April and was supervised by AM-PM Safety.

A new, safer entrance way was developed into the caretaker's compound.

The Middle house down-stairs has been converted to:

- A year heads office
- A quiet workspace
- A conference room.

The internal re-painting, carpeting of classrooms and offices continued.

An application to replace the prefabs was turned down by the DES.

A summer works application for further upgrade to heating systems in the Gym, dining room and former Boarders houses was turned down by the DES.

Emergency funding has been applied for in relation to the leaking underground pipes connecting the church to the main school heating system.

Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities

The BOM expresses its gratitude to the teaching staff for organising the following activities for students in 2015/2016:

Basketball	Maths Week
Badminton	Science Week
Meditation	Chess Club
Athletics	Horse riding
Football	Samba Drumming
Handball	Young Social Innovators
Hurling	Ski Trip to the US
Self-defence	RE Trip to the Mosque
Rugby	2 nd Year tour to Dublin
Educational tour to Barcelona	Higher Options & Campus visits
Paired reading	Science week in WIT
Field trips	3 rd Year to Dáil Eireann
Coding Club	Thomas Moore Flag events
Poetry Aloud	Green School Committee
Theatre trips	Cycle Against Suicide
History Tour	Aintree Tour



Careers Trips 6th Year

Gaisce

GCC's Got Talent

Library access at lunch time

Annual Sports Day

Academic awards to acknowledge personal achievement in house examinations were presented to each year group while the annual Bob Quinn Award was also presented.

Transition Year

104 students took Transition Year in 2015/2016.

Student and parental appraisal of the school's Transition Year programme continues to be very positive.

Child Protection

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) was Mr. Mark O'Brien and the Assistant DLP was Mr Aidan O'Brien. The Board will carry out its annual review of its Child Protection Policy in September 2016.

Care of Students

All Class Teachers continued to take a keen interest in the pastoral care of their students. 30 teachers have taken on a voluntary pastoral role of Class Tutor in order to support students. In addition, the school's Guidance Counsellor, Ms. Byrne, was available to assist in any possible way.

A dedicated Pastoral Care Co-ordination Team continued to be very active in 2015/2016. Comprising the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplains, Counsellor, Learning Support Teachers, this team met every week and ensured that adequate provision was made for all students experiencing particular difficulties in school and in their personal lives.

This Pastoral Care team also organised the following events through the year were also heavily involved in organising events to support our Positive Mental Health Awareness through Friends for Life and the Cycle Against Suicide.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The school's policy in relation to alleged and actual instances of bullying changed in 2014 in line with instructions to all schools from the Department of Education and Skills.

Good Counsel College is also part of the ISPCC Blue Shield scheme with a reporting tool available on the school's homepage.

The Post of Anti-Bullying Coordinator is currently vacant but will be filled as part of the review of Posts of Responsibility. The Principal and Deputy Principal deal with reports until such time as the vacancy is filled.

The full policy is contained on the school website.

Student Empowerment

Clem Rossiter and Jack Burford were the Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy respectively in 2015/2016. They were assisted by a team of prefects who are to be commended for their commitment and contribution to the School. Billy Wickham and Daniel Murphy are Head and Deputy Head for the 2016/17 year. Their Good Counsel's 'Got Talent Show' also raised significant money for charity and provided a night of entertainment in the school.

The Students' Council operated with the support of Mr Younger. The council's work was outlined on the school website throughout the year. The chairperson of the Council attended the ISSU AGM this year. The ISSU also provided support and training to our Council Members. The significant upgrade of toilet facilities is one of their many achievements.

15 Unitas leaders in 6th year were appointed and trained, with thanks to Ms Bolger, Mr A O'Brien and Sheilbaggin Outdoor Ed Centre, and were tasked with the responsibility to assist the 150 1st year students as they made the transition from primary to secondary school. They supported incoming 1st years on a daily and weekly basis along with supporting their induction in John F Kennedy Park.

Code of Behaviour

Students continued to co-operate in a very positive way with the school's behaviour code as evidenced by favourable comments throughout the year from teachers and visitors to the school. The Board thanks the students for their excellent behaviour.

The Board ratified a new Code of Behaviour in 2016 with a focus on the underlying principles of the School Charter and the reward of positive behaviour. This charter was the result of a collaborative approach from staff, students and parents.

Parental Involvement and Contact

The school organized information meetings for parents in 2015/2016 on the following matters:

- New 1st year students, September 2015
- Fastforward information night (Learning Support)
- Subject choices for 2nd and 5th years
- Information nights for 3rd and 6th years
- School tours information night for Barcelona Trip.
- Central Applications Office (CAO) • Coping with Leaving Cert.
- Careers Speed dating night.
- Parent-teacher meetings for every year group
- TY Graduation Afternoon
- 6th Year graduation Mass
- Open Days
- One-to-one meetings with the parents of incoming students 2015/16.



All meetings were very well attended by parents and it continues to be necessary to use the school gym for some of these larger meetings and events.

The school website was updated weekly and contained a great deal of information for parents on current news as well as all school policies. For families without internet access, hard copies of all updates and policies continued to be available from reception. Several useful links were added to the website through the year. The school also has a very active twitter account and Facebook page for past pupils.

The Principal, Deputy Principal and all teachers were available on an appointment basis to meet parents to discuss any concerns about students.

Representatives of the Parents' Council met with Mr. O'Brien, Principal, on a regular basis to liaise on school matters. Parents were asked by the school throughout the year to help ensure a high level of attendance at school by their sons.

Ms S Dempsey, Ms H Bolger and Ms S Murphy were the teacher representative on the Parents' Council for the year. Fr Collender also attended all meetings. Mr. O'Brien (Principal) addressed the Parents' Council A.G.M., and attended most council meetings thereafter. Mr Tony Murphy served as chairperson for the year. An account of the council's activities is to be found on the school's website.

The parents council was actively involved again this year and the events organised were;

- Disco night in Brandon House Hotel
- Annual Bursary to two 6th year students
- Annual 6th Year BBQ

Parents also assisted in the running of the Cycle Against Suicide.

School Development Planning

All policies that make up the school plan are available on the school's website:

The following have been the main developments in school planning throughout 2015/2016:

- The ongoing review of subject development plans in all departments.
- Staff continue to develop numeracy and literacy resources for our SNIP programme being rolled out to all 1st and 2nd Years.
- The development of the new Code of Behaviour.

Professional Development of Staff

A Staff Handbook has been developed by the Principal for all teaching and SNA staff. This will support teachers/SNAs in their daily working lives.

Teachers attended DES and other in-service in a range of subject areas, particularly Project Maths and S.P.H.E. and Learning Support.

The teaching staff also engaged in detailed subject planning development.

The Principal and two teachers have completed the first 3 modules of Barrie Bennet Instructional Leadership course. These teachers will complete 1 further modules over the next 2 months. The next phase of this training will involve the teacher led introduction of instructional leadership strategies to all staff.

GCC is part of the Droichead mentoring programme with Professionals Support Team training fully completed by two PST members and partially completed by two others. Newly Qualified Teachers have been mentored, observed and completed their induction modules. This is seen as a positive development from all those involved where teachers are openly sharing best practice.

Entry into the PDST Wellread initiative and support from the PDST.

Staff are encouraged to be active in their subject associations and the Board will meet these affiliation fees.

Board of Management

The BOM dealt with a number of complex issues throughout its second year including, building projects, admissions, policy development and HR.

An agreed report was available to all stakeholders on the schools website from the 2015 academic year onwards.

Augustinian Schools Trust (AST)

The Board of Management, Staff and parents have been informed of the organisational structural change incorporated in the newly formed AST, effective from September 1st 2015. The principal and Chairperson have attended any AST meetings to which invitation was extended.

The AST held their Board meetings here in GCC on three occasions over the year.

Financial Accountability

The school had a Financial Review in June 2015 supported by the FSSU of the Joint Managerial Body. Recommendations from this response were implemented throughout 2015/16:

- Introduction of Cash Registers
- Minor changes to accounting practices
- Review of cash procedures around foreign school tours
- Development of an Asset Register.

The Independent Auditors' 12 month Report to the trustees for the year ended 31 August 2016 is due to be completed at the end of September 2016. The school's accountants are:

"RDA,

Certified Public Accountants,

5 Upper Georges Street, Wexford.

The Board is very grateful to families who supported the Voluntary Contribution Scheme.

Community Links

The BOM is particularly appreciative of the assistance provided by the local New Ross and wider community in providing work experience placements for 104 Transition Year in 2015/2016.

In addition, the school appreciates the generosity of local clubs and organisations in sharing their facilities with our staff and students.

The school supported a number of local organisations throughout the year;

1. New Ross Town AFC who use the school grounds at evenings and weekends as their venue for games and training.
2. New Ross Rugby Club who use our facilities for training.
3. Barrow Wheelers Cycling Club who have hosted Sportives from our grounds.
4. New Ross St Patricks Day Parade committee who use our grounds as the set up point for the annual parade.
5. New Ross Parish Church, for confirmation preparation days.
6. The Taize group who use the church on Friday nights.
7. The school Gym is also used on a nightly basis – fee attached to its use.

The school has also interacted on formal levels with:

1. Tusla – regarding Child Protection, Family Conferences and Attendance
2. NEPS – Educational Psychological Assessments and Friendship Programme and information to our Pastoral Care Team on Student Support Programmes.
3. CAHMS – Behavioural and psychiatric support.
4. NCSE – Applications for Special Education Needs
5. Feeder Primary Schools – Student passports.



Conclusion

Our thanks to the students, parents and staff working as part of the school community for their support and commitment to the education and wellbeing of all our students.

Please direct any queries on this report by email to the Principal at

mark.obrien@goodcounselcollege.ie