



An Augustinian School

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

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**1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015.**



SEPTEMBER 1, 2015  
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 2014 to 31 August 2015. It was approved at a Board of Management meeting on 22 September 2015.

The next report will issue in autumn 2016.

## **Total enrolment**

800 students were enrolled in the school in 2014/2015.

## **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, 1<sup>st</sup> Year Welcome Mass. Retreats for 5th year students. Weekly mass for each year group. Our 5<sup>th</sup> years also participated in their annual retreat.

The Principal and another teacher attended the Augustinian Values Institute (AVI) in Toronto Canada. This provided an opportunity to reflect and share good practice in promoting Augustinian Values.

A number of teachers from Good Counsel College and our sister school St Augustine's Dungarvan attended a mini AVI in Carlisle with the Austin Friars to build on our common Augustinian Values. GCC hosted these schools in the latter part of 2014/15 academic year.

Two of our 5<sup>th</sup> 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 €15,000 for the following charities:



MND Ice Bucket Challenge, Cycle Against Suicide, Donal Walsh Live Life Foundation, Trocaire and the “Walk in my Shoes” mental health awareness programme. Food drives were also run for St Vincent de Paul. A significant sum was also raised for a past pupil recovering from Leukaemia-this fundraiser was very much driven by a fantastic team of parents, students and staff involved in equestrian sport.

### **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 2015. Over 81% of our 2013/14 cohort transferred to 3<sup>rd</sup> level education with a number of 3<sup>rd</sup> level scholarships also achieved.

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 2015 were, once again, considerably above the national average. However the English Department raised concerns over the quality of marking on the Leaving Certificate Higher level English exam. This was conveyed to the SEC. This analysis is shared with the school’s subject departments, BOM and Parents’ Council.

The school rejoices in the academic success of all students. Particular mention to, Mark Murphy 2<sup>nd</sup> in Ireland for his Junior Cert Technology project, Conor Kelleher (5<sup>th</sup> Year 2014/15) for his achievements at AILO (Linguistics Olympiad) and our senior Maths team who won the South East IMTA Quiz and came 4<sup>th</sup> in the All Ireland hosted in NUIG. 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 30 students from 6:30pm to 9:30pm. A pilot Homework Club was launched in late April and proved successful. This targets students in need of assistance with homework. This will be rolled out again from October 2015.



A follow up Irish inspection was carried out by the DES and the favourable findings can be found on the schools website.

2014/2015 saw the continuation of a Spanish exchange programme. A number of Spanish Students joined classes in GCC on a short 6 week block. 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 2014/2015 was 56.9.

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 teacher, Mr Kilian Traynor.

The school was granted 6 full-time Special Needs Assistant positions for 2014/2015.

With a combined total of over 64 years' service to Good Counsel College, Mr Kilian Traynor retired from his teaching positions on 31 August 2015 and Mr Seán MacCormaic resigned his position. Both are thanked sincerely for making such a fine contribution to the school over such a long period of time.

The school appointed a new Secretary, Ms. Andrea Swan, in September 2014 following the retirement of Ms Betty Kelly who is thanked for her contribution to the school.

### **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.



All teacher laptops were repaired/upgraded. Speakers were installed in all classrooms to accentuate the use of Digital Projectors as a teaching tool. 25 new machines were installed in the DCG room. 6 machines were updated from old DCG stock in the Learning Support Building.

A new whole school photocopying and print management system was installed during the year in an effort to reduce waste paper. This supports the efforts of our re-established Green Schools committee.

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 was launched on Friday afternoons from 4:15 to 5:15 with the support of Mr Trevor Murphy of Alignment Tech. 20 students, from across all year groups, attended this course and feedback is positive. The course will be offered again in 2015/16.

### **Capital Development**

Planning permission for our new ASD Unit and extension to Villanova was granted by Wexford County Council. This means that we are now firmly on course to see construction begin in autumn 2015 and to move into our new building in September 2016.

The new ASD Unit will accommodate 12 boys while the extension will increase our capacity to offer Technology, DCG and TG.

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

The entrance hallway was retiled and painted to include our School emblem. The Garden of Memories was completed and officially opened by Fr Hennebry in September 2014, with the entire school community celebrating.

The entire heating System in the Main-school and Cascia buildings along with the boilers was upgraded as part of the Summer Works scheme in 2014/15.

Student toilets were upgraded in the main school following requests from the Student Council. Fire rated ceilings and doors installed in the Geography end of the main school.

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

### **Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities**

The BOM expresses its gratitude to the teaching staff for organising the following activities for students in 2014/2015:

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

Careers Trips 6<sup>th</sup> Year

Gaisce

GCC's Got Talent

Library access at lunch time

Annual Sports Day

It is important to acknowledge all success and the school held functions in November to highlight the success of our sports people throughout 2013/14. There has been significant success on the playing fields again this year with a double in Under 16 Colleges A Football and Hurling in addition to a Senior A Leinster football title.

The Deputy Principal has reintroduced academic awards to acknowledge personal achievement in house examinations while the annual Bob Quinn Award was also presented.

### **Transition Year**

96 students took Transition Year in 2014/2015.

Student and parental appraisal of the school's Transition Year programme continues to be very positive. Feedback from parent/student and teacher evaluations have led to significant remodelling of the modular nature of TY for the 2015/16 school year.

### **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 2015. The Principal also liaised with the trustees following the publication of the NBSCCCI review of Safeguarding Practice in the Irish Province on Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> 2015.

### **Care of Students**

All Class Teachers continued to take a keen interest in the pastoral care of their students. 29 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 2014/2015. 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 organized the following events through the year were also heavily involved in organising events to support our Positive Mental Health Awareness week including; Donal Walsh Live Life Foundation, Humorfit, Michael Fennelly – Healthy body, healthy mind.

### **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 now part of the ISPCCC 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**

Garreth Browne and Aidan Tully were the Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy respectively in 2014/2015. They were assisted by a team of prefects who are to be commended for their commitment and contribution to the School. Clem Rossiter and Jack Burford are Head and Deputy Head for the 2015/16 year. The prefects led a very successful fundraiser for MND in September 2014. 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 with a view to affiliation. The ISSU also provided support and training to our Council Members. The significant upgrade of toilet facilities is one of their many achievements.

15 Meitheal leaders in 6th year were appointed and trained 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 1<sup>st</sup> years on a daily and weekly basis along with supporting their induction in John F Kennedy Park. We are developing our own peer support group to be called 'Unitas' for 2015/16.

### **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 2015 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 2013/2014 on the following matters:

- New 1st year students, September 2013
- Fastforward information night (Learning Support)
- Subject choices for 2nd and 5th years
- Information nights for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years
- School tours information night for Barcelona Trip.
- Central Applications Office (CAO) • Coping with Leaving Cert.
- Parent-teacher meetings for every year group
- TY Graduation Afternoon
- 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

Mr. B Quigley was 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;

- Cookery Demonstration with Edward Hayden
- Annual Bursary to two 6<sup>th</sup> year students
- Annual 6<sup>th</sup> Year BBQ

Parents also assisted in the running of the Cycle Against Suicide and fundraiser for ill past pupil as outlined above.

## **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 2014/2015:

- 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 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Years.
- The formal review of the following policies/area of activity:

2014/2015

1. Numeracy SSE - implementation
2. Literacy SSE & SIP- implementation
4. Admissions Policy
5. Anti-bullying Policy
6. Child Protection Policy
7. Code of Behaviour
8. Staff Handbook for Teachers & SNAs

## **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.

Good Counsel College joined the Action Learning Network supported by Forbairt Programme. The team led by the Deputy Principal also included the Principal and

two lead teachers. Action research was conducted into the Assessment for learning and the impact it could have on teaching and learning across GCC. The group through the teacher leaders presented their findings and demonstrated 'best practice' at staff meetings. The PDST also provided support to teachers in this area.

Two SNA's had their fees met by the Board in order to accommodate further study in UCC which will enhance their contribution to the learning support team in GCC.

The Principal and two teachers have completed the first module of Barrie Bennet Instructional Leadership course. These teachers will complete three further modules over the next eighteen 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 pilot 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.

Dr Fergus Heffernan of RD Consult, Kilkenny worked with Staff in March 2014 focusing on the area of stress management in work and at home. Mr Michael Kearns NUI Maynooth Education Department led a workshop around the area of 'Managing the classroom as a positive place of learning' in August 2015.

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

### **Board of Management**

The New BOM was officially appointed on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2014. The BOM dealt with a number of complex issues throughout its first year including, building projects, admissions, policy development and HR.

An agreed report will be 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 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. A full due diligence process was openly engaged in by the School in supporting the Trust in its establishment. This marks a milestone in the life of GCC and ensures the continued support of, and for Augustinian values in the College.

### **Financial Accountability**

The school had a Financial Review in June 2015 supported by the FSSU of the Joint Managerial Body. We await a formal written response.

The Independent Auditors' 14 month Report to the trustees for the year ended 31 August 2014 concludes as follows:

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In accordance with instructions given to us we have prepared, without carrying out an Audit, the Accounts set out on pages 2 to 10 from the accounts records of the business and from the information and explanations supplied to us.

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 96 Transition Year in 2014/2015.

In addition, the school appreciates the generosity of local clubs and organizations 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 cycle safety classes and 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 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. Saplings Goresbridge - RE: Autism Home Room and transfer protocols
6. 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

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