

St Mary's Secondary School, Macroom

Annual Report to Parents 2010 / 2011

1. Mission Statement

The School aims to provide a caring and just environment where the individuality of the student and the professionalism of the staff is recognised. The School needs to be a place where the student feels at ease, affirmed, accepted and listened to. This gives hope to the student and helps her to develop into an adult who is content and happy.

The School provides a grounding in the Catholic faith inspired by Christian values and standards.

The atmosphere of the school instils in the student a love of learning and discovery which leads to academic success, to the best of each student's ability. The Curriculum prepares the student for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life which involves education for employment, unemployment and leisure time.

A happy school community which includes staff and pupils achieves fulfilment for all.

1. School Development Planning:

Priority areas and action taken in 2010-2011

A priority for the year was to embed the new leadership team of Principal, Deputy Principal and Board of Management. A very good working relationship has been established between the Principal and Deputy and the Board of Management is meeting regularly and functioning very efficiently in the best interests of the students and the school.

Staff in-service was given at the beginning of the year on Cooperative Learning Methodologies and this was well received among all staff. A group of eight teachers took this on, with the Principal and Deputy, as a Learning Schools Project which ran for most of the year. Teachers worked on the methodologies in class and feedback was gathered from teachers and pupils. While there was no indication that results improved significantly in the short term, it was clear that pupil engagement and enjoyment in the lessons improved. We will continue to look at this next year.

The school underwent a successful WSE-MLL inspection in April. While we await the formal written report, the verbal report given by the reporting inspectors back to the staff and Board of Management was very positive. The school was commended for its atmosphere, teaching and learning observed, student attendance patterns, working relationships among staff, use of ICT, continuous professional development of staff and evidence of self-evaluation. Results in state examinations were found to be very good and the practice of subject departments analysing these results was seen as good practice. Suggestions made for further improvement included a review of Posts of Responsibility (already commenced), inclusion of SPHE into 3rd year curriculum (this will be in place for 2011/2012), and using the information gathered from the student and parent questionnaires to direct further staff development and training (also ongoing).

Policy development was ongoing throughout the year and involved all members of the school community. Policies that were adopted or reviewed during the year include: Substance Use Policy, Child Protection Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Critical Incident Management Policy, Attendance Policy, Staff Induction Policy and Suspension and Expulsion Policy. There is a risk assessment in progress, which encompasses all areas of the school. Additions were made to the Admissions and R.E. Policies concerning Religious Education

The school used the ICT grant to equip all classrooms with Interactive Whiteboard Units and place a number of visualisers on each floor. A large and a small laptop trolley were equipped with a total of 26 laptops and these are now being used by teachers in their teaching in the classrooms with very positive results being reported by teachers and pupils. Further training in this area is planned.

Special Needs Education

The Learning Support Coordinator worked closely with the Deputy Principal and a large number of teachers to ensure all students had their required access to Learning Support. This occurred in a number of ways: individual withdrawal, small group withdrawal and team teaching. Team teaching was seen as being very effective and will be utilised more going forward. The Principal, Deputy, Learning Support coordinator and Guidance Counsellor meet on a weekly basis to discuss the individual care and special education needs of students. The range of SEN incidents in our school include: Mild General Learning Difficulties, Borderline Mild General Learning Difficulties, Specific Learning Difficulties and Multiple Disabilities.

Newcomer Students

The school has quite a number of newcomer students who have all integrated very well into the school community. There is a particularly large number in First Year and the school worked hard during the year to ensure they settled in well. They were given continued language support despite no allocation being received from the Department for them. In the final term we held an "International Morning" which highlighted and celebrated this cultural diversity for First Year students.

Disadvantaged students

The vast majority of parents and pupils place a high value on education and as such we do not experience educational disadvantage. However economic disadvantage is present and remains hidden, as both parents and pupils are very proud. Parents who struggled financially to meet their daughter's educational needs are supported by the school where this is possible.

2. Faith Development

As a Catholic school, the management, staff, parents and pupils work in partnership to provide a caring environment in which Catholic-Christian values are fostered and maintained. In these changing times with an ever-increasing tendency towards

secularisation, it is felt that, more than ever, the school can act as a beacon, “a light for all nations”, for the wider community in proposing an alternative vision of the world based on the Gospel. This vision promotes the values of social justice, charity, active participation in the community and a deep engagement with personal faith.

A beautifully carved wooden cross, crafted by our caretaker and designed by the school community, was added to the prayer room this year. It tells the story of Catherine McAuley’s vision and the Mercy tradition. This was unveiled to the whole school community with a simple ceremony organised by the R.E. teachers and the school Chaplin.

A tree planting ceremony, organised by pupils and with the help of some teachers, took place in October in memory of the late Mr. Gerard Healy (RIP) who was a former teacher in the school. In February a commemorative stained glass piece was blessed and unveiled in his memory.

R.E. Provision

- ❖ Junior Cycle –1st year: 3 class periods per week, 2nd and 3rd year 2 class periods per week. R.E. is taught according to the examination syllabus although the subject is not taken in the state examinations.
- ❖ Senior Cycle – 2 or 3 class periods per week depending on group. Teachers follow the non-exam syllabus.

Observance of Liturgical year

Where the school timetable permits (i.e. unless we are on mid-term break or holidays) we celebrate

- ❖ The month of November
- ❖ Advent
- ❖ Christmas
- ❖ Lent
- ❖ Easter
- ❖ Major and minor feast days, such as: Mercy Day (celebrated with the local Primary School and the Sisters of Mercy, Macroom), The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, The Feast of Saint Gobnait, etc.

3. Pastoral Care

The Pastoral care team consisting of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Coordinator met on a weekly basis to consider the care needs of individual students and groups of students. All staff were involved in the care of the students. Assemblies were used on a weekly basis to give students positive guidance and direction and provide time for reflection on a whole range of issues.

A Positive Mental Health week was organized for the whole school. This involved raising pupil awareness through, guest speakers, an art competition, positive slogans around the school, lunchtime radio, themed drama presentations, and a talk to the whole staff.

The S.P.H.E. programme for 1st, 2nd and 4th year students was complimented by outside speakers who spoke on sexual health issues. Talks and/or workshops were also provided to students/parents on learning styles and study skills, subject choices and career options.

The 'Buddy' mentoring system for First Year students ran very successfully again this year. Feedback from First Years and from Fourth Years (who acted as mentors), was very positive and some small changes will be incorporated into the scheme next year based on this evaluation.

4. Positive behaviour

On the whole, behaviour of all students is extremely good. The Code of Behaviour emphasises Personal Responsibility and teacher (and students) reinforce this all the time. It is also done formally at assemblies and on the intercom. Every opportunity that arose for civic responsibility and personal development was used and then students acknowledged for their efforts – fundraising for a number of worthy causes for example.

5. Parental Involvement

The parents association was very active throughout the year and held regular monthly meetings in the school. The Principal attended most of the meetings. Issues considered were policy development, fundraising, facilities, teaching and learning. Parents association funds have now been streamlined into two accounts and will form part of the annual 'audited' school accounts going forward. Funding was provided to install shelves in all the student's lockers and there is a commitment to purchase gym mats for use in P.E.

Members of the Parents Association took an active part in the WSE-MLL that took place in the school in April. Parental response rates to the questionnaires that were part of this inspection were very good.

Parental attendance at Parent Teacher meetings and other information evenings was very good. The vast majority of parents have a very strong commitment to their daughter's education and are readily accessible for teachers when needed. There was very good parental attendance at the school show, the school awards night, the Leaving Cert and Transition Year graduation ceremonies.

6. Board Of Management

A new Board was established in October. The Board met on the following occasions during the year: 02/11/10, 07/12/10, 01/02/11, 08/03/11, 12/04/11, 10/05/11, 31/05/11 and 21/06/11. All meetings were very well attended and properly conducted. There was an agreed report produced for each meeting which was made available to staff. Copies of minutes of the meetings were sent to CEIST. The main items addressed during the year were: inauguration of new Board and roles and responsibilities, policy development, ongoing financial monitoring (finance sub-committee established), setting up of

electronic banking, staffing and contracts, curriculum provision, general running of the school as reported by the Principal, WSE-MLL.

7. Student Council Report

The student council met every Tuesday at lunchtime with the coordinator, Ms Maughan. Members of the council are from every class group in the school with senior students acting as officers of the council. It consisted of 18 students. School policies under review or for adoption by the school were considered by the council and feedback given to the Principal. A number of fundraising activities such as cake sales were organised to help send sick children to Lourdes. A pin for the student council members was designed and sourced and will be presented to all members next year. The council conducted a survey on recycling among students and presented the results to the school community. Attempts were made to establish better recycling habits among the students. The council completed a mural with the help of the Art Teacher. The council ran an art poster competition in conjunction with the positive mental health week and organised the lunchtime radio. They ran an Easter Egg hunt for First Year students.

8. Extra Curricular activities

The school continued to provide a wide range of extra curricular and co-curricular activities during the past year as follows:

DAY	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	TIME
Monday	Drama	Library	1.25
	School Choir	Music Room	1.25
Tuesday	Computer Club	Computer Room	1.25
	Athletics	Pitch	
	Art Society	Art Room	1.15
	Camogie	“Weirs”	1.20
			After school
Wednesday	Basketball	Sports Hall	1.15
	Football	Pitch	1.15
Thursday	Choir for 1 st years	Music Room	1.25
	Volleyball		
	Non National Meeting	Sports Hall D.P.’s office	1.25 1.25
Friday	“Buddy Time”	General Purpose Room	1.45

CO- CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT	ACTIVITY	SUPPORTED BY:
English	<p>Essay competitions</p> <p>Visiting authors</p>	<p>Cork Mental Health Listowel Writers Concern Sean Dunne Memorial Briery Gap</p>
Irish	Table Quiz	Gael-taca
Maths	<p>1st year Maths Quiz Maths Enrichment Classes J.C. Honours Maths Quiz</p>	<p>IMTA Maths Olympiad MTA</p>
Music	<p>All Ireland Briery Gap Choral festival AIMS Choral Festival String Quartet Cork Pops Participants in Jazz Fest. Brass Ensemble Traditional performance Transition Year Show</p>	<p>Briery Gap theatre</p> <p>Wexford Music Teachers Carducci</p> <p>Cork Jazz Festival in conjunction with Beamish Folk Festival 4th year students</p>
Business	<p>“Dragon’s Den” “Build a Bank Challenge” School Bank</p>	<p>Co. Cork Enterprise Board AIB</p>
Art	<p>Photographic competition Film competition Art competition Photographic competition</p>	<p>Mental Health Ireland Fresh Film Festival Texaco Bord Gais</p>
Science	<p>“Science Debating Issues” Young Scientists Exhibition Chemistry Quiz Junior Science Quiz Senior Science Quiz Scifest Science Extravaganza</p>	<p>Tyndall Institute, UCC BT Phizers ISTA UCC CIT 4th years</p>
Home Economics	<p>Milk It Awards “Take Away my Way”</p>	<p>National Dairy Council St Angela’s College, Sligo</p>
History	History Quiz	History Teachers Assoc.
French	<p>French Quiz for Seniors Competition on French Idioms for 1st to 4th years</p>	<p>French Teachers Assoc. Claire Destombes, French Assistant</p>
Fundraising	<p>Three students visit the HOPE projects in Calcutta, India</p>	HOPE Foundation

Notable achievements included:

- U 16 ½ Camogie Team won the County Final
- Junior Football Team reached the Munster final
- Four students from the school were selected for the Cork U-14 and Minor football teams.
- A number of successes in the Munster Track and Field competition: 2nd in Senior Shot, 3rd in Senior Hammer, 3rd in Intermediate 1500m, 1st in Intermediate 100m and 300m
- Strong participation in 1st yr, 2nd yr, Intermediate and Senior Basketball competition.
- Two teams from the school qualified for the final of the Dragon's Den Competition.
- School bank received and award in the regional competition
- School choir came 1st in the Middleton Choral Festival
- 2nd year students are 1 of 6 teams (out of an entry of 300 teams) to qualify for the national finals of the NDC "Milk it Awards".

9. Enrolment challenges

64 students are coming into First Year next year and there are 51 students are leaving from the current Sixth Year. 3 students are leaving from other year groups and there are 2 new entrants into year groups other than first year. This should leave our numbers up by twelve next year. There is a worrying trend in the main feeder primary school with significantly lower student numbers in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes and this will have an impact on the school.

10. Brief financial overview of financial position of school, highlighting any area of concern

The school is in a healthy financial position as is shown in our annual school accounts. These accounts are submitted to CEIST and then to the FSSU. The Budget for the next year has been submitted and approved by CEIST. The Parents Association funds will be accounted for in the annual school accounts going forward.

11. Other relevant areas

Very tight space in the new building and no area suitable for large school community gatherings remain a concern. While the sports hall is functioning at the moment, it will require some work to sort out the condensation / ventilation problems. Access to the hall, given its location on the convent grounds, may become more of an issue in the future.