

Board of Management, School of the Divine Child, Annual Report June 2021

School of the Divine Child started the 2020/2021 academic year with 40 students. We have a staff of 11 teachers – An Administrative Principal, 7 class teachers, 3 part time teachers for Home Economics, Music, Science, and Physical Education, 14 SNAs, 13 Bus Escorts, 1 Part time caretaker and 1 part time school secretary. Three of the Teaching staff form the In School Management Team. The School Inspector is Paul Stephens.

School of the Divine Child is a special school designated by the Department of Education and Skills to provide an education to boys and girls from 4-18 years who present with physical disabilities and complex medical conditions. The school is a Roman Catholic School under the Patronage of the Diocese of Cork and Ross. As a school community we foster inclusiveness, independence, individuality, and ability. We strive to ensure that each student can become as independent as possible despite the challenges of life. We are proud of the friendly atmosphere in the school where everybody is valued for their individuality. Students have their own Individual Education and Care Plan.

The Board of Management is:

Chairperson (Patron's Nominee): Dave Ronayne

Patron's Nominee: Miriam Murphy

Community Nominee: Jim O'Shaughnessy

Community Nominee: Kate Creedon

Parents Nominee: Colleen Worthington

Parents Nominee: Terry O'Neill

Teacher Nominee: Mary McAuliffe

School Principal: Patricia Harrington

Preparations for the 2020/2021 school year started in mid-July 2020 when the In School Management Team organised a series of staff consultations over zoom in order to prepare the School's Covid Policy and Procedures. These were sent out to the Board for discussion and approval before being distributed to parents. Key changes included the wearing of masks, increased hand washing and sanitisation as well as enhanced cleaning.

After meeting with Enable Ireland in late August, the Board of Management organised to split the personal care area in two in order to assist in the safe management of students' care needs. Prefabs were also divided in order to create an isolation room and three safe play areas.

Our Academic Year

The School was open to students for 156 days out of a possible 183 days this year. From September until Christmas the school was divided into Junior, Middle and senior classes which we called Bubbles. Outdoor activities were prioritised. In the month of January teachers gave classes over zoom, many of them working from their own classroom. Our return in February was challenging for all but we were assisted by our parents who cooperated in full.

In September, we celebrated National Bike Week by showing off our wheelchairs. Poster designs included '*If there's a wheel, there's a way*' and '*That's how I Roll!*'.

We also worked with Lisa Cliffe, our Creative Associate, in making plans for ourselves as a Creative School. We agreed that we needed to include the student voice in all of our plans and an advisory group of students from each class came together regularly for meetings on Zoom.

We celebrated Maths Week in October by going outside and investigating car registrations, makes and models. We even researched the price of cars!

The Lord Mayor paid a virtual visit to the School just before Hallowe'en and we met him in costume.

We started our Bluestar European Programme Project which gave us an opportunity to study the history, famous people, capital cities and foods from different countries. We made a delicious paella.

November saw the introduction of our JCSP literacy initiative DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). We were also honoured to be asked to participate in a promotional video for Muintir Na Tire's school garden competition.

By December, we had made a beautiful video with Clodagh Kearney from Music Mash Up. This video was edited by students from MTUCSM and can be seen on our website.

Our students told us that they wanted to see more of the other classes, so for the month of December we participated in a windows project where we spoke and left messages at the windows of different classrooms. This project culminated with a Christmas singalong in rooms on the four sides of the courtyard.

In January, the Board of Management made plans for our Booklet 'Shaping the Future' and for our Video, both of which are now published on the School website.

February was a difficult month as students returned to School, travelling on deserted roads as most of the country was in lockdown. Garry Jones of theharmonicaforge.com arrived to our School with a gift of musical chimes which he installed in our garden. Thank you Garry!

We still dressed up in preparation for St. Patrick's day and ended up with three St. Patricks. George and Rachel came to the school with their multisensory performances as part of the Creative Schools Project.

One of the by products of this year's lockdown was the introduction of sea shanties on social media. Clodagh Kearney helped us compose a selection of our own sea shanties.

The summer term has been busy with visits from a Celebrity Chef, filming the first stages of our Opera with Oran, Incredible Edibles programme, Lifelong Learning Festival and more.

In curricular areas we continued our focus on communication and the power of being a good communication partner. In numeracy, we continued with our development of maths for life opportunities, focussing as always on shopping and recognition of money and identification of time.

Assessment is ongoing in School of the Divine Child and we use a range of resources to track and document individual student's progress. All progress is documented on Aladdin and in student paper files. We offer parents two parent/teacher meetings annually where progress and future planning is discussed.

Building works funded by the Emergency Works section of the Department of Education and Skills addressed the need for a new gas boiler heating system, fire safety measures including a new alarm, new ceilings and lighting. The Board of Management took advantage of these works by organising the installation of WiFi throughout the School. High grade floor coverings replaced the 50 year old tiled school corridors. Painting and decorating of all rooms has commenced.

Our digital strategy is well advanced. We now have WiFi throughout the school. Our teachers work from their own laptops, at home and in school. We have identified the need for more resources so that teachers can work on communication strategies using Snap Core First and Grid.

The Board of Management ratified and /or reviewed the following Policies during this school year:

- Admissions and Enrolment Policy
- Protected Disclosures Policy
- Child Safeguarding
- Anti Bullying Policy Checklist
- Health and Safety Statement
- Data Protection
- Covid 19 Policy

The school accounts have been verified by external auditors, F.J. Forde and Company, Accountants.