

Board of Management Agreed Report 14th September 2022

The Board welcomed our new staff Indira Doonan, Chloe Harrington (Teachers); Lisa Bannon, Janice Crowley, Sinead Condon, Kim Buckley, Aoife Donnelly and Audrey O'Brien (SNAs). Heike Zeisel who is completing an internship this month in our school was also welcomed. Thanks were extended to Karen Clarke, SNA, for her service and the Board wishes her well in her new appointment. Staff are to be commended on their efforts in establishing the school which opened its doors less than 12 months ago and the Chairperson will be writing to staff on behalf of the Board.

The Board discussed in detail Progressing Disability Services including the issue of certain families being denied home support and respite services by certain Disability Network Teams because of their decision to enrol their child in our school and will be raising the issue with the patron. This has been the focus of media attention nationally and has been raised in the Dáil. The school was in contact with Minister Rabbitte's office and the HSE Disability Services during the summer assisting the Minister's proposed reintroduction of therapy services to special schools this year, however there is no news yet.

Induction for our 16 new students is ongoing with the new class arrangements and combinations working quite well. As the school has reached capacity (48 students) the Board will shortly issue its Admissions Notice for 2023, however no places will be available for the intake Junior Infants group. A revised Admissions Policy and Appropriate Behaviour policy were also ratified by the Board.

There is further training for staff planned for this year, with training confirmed NCSE on Language & Communication (2 days) and Junior Cycle for Teachers – Level 1 & 2 Learning Programmes this term, with further training on the Primary Language Curriculum to be confirmed.

The school continues to establish links with partners in special education locally, and welcomed Carol Neenan, CETB Active Inclusion, who visited the school last June to discuss education pathways for older students. She met with classes and teachers and gave the Principal an outline of possible appropriate training routes after school leaving age for some of our senior students. The school also welcomed UCC School of Education PGDSEN course facilitators Kevin Cahill and Dan O'Sullivan. The Board has joined the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education. (NABMSE) The Cork Special Schools Principals group met with senior officials from the Department of Education and outlined the many issues facing the special school sector in Cork.

The landscaping and minor works were completed over the summer and the contractor is now finished, so maintenance of the school is now the school's sole responsibility. The Snozelen is also complete and has been in much demand. The school has also installed new furniture for our new students.

The Board discussed and is keenly aware of the financial challenges faced in running schools, particularly energy bills this winter, and the ongoing issues with the School Transport Scheme nationally.

The school has introduced the SeeSaw software platform which is being introduced across the school, particularly to support assessment for our Junior Cycle students.

The Board also agreed a list of management and leadership priorities in anticipation of the appointment of a Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal this term.