



St. Louis Secondary School  
Carrickmacross

# Annual Report for Parent's Association

2021

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The aim of St. Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross, is to foster a school community where all the members live in a friendly environment, where young people are taught to think for themselves, to be responsible for their actions, to hold in respect the world in which they live, and to recognise the importance of spiritual values in their lives.

### **Teaching and Learning**

#### **What we achieved**

- We had a study skills day with follow up sessions for both our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students.
- We continue to up-skill our teachers in the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool. All of our teachers have a surface pro and have engaged in a series of training sessions over the course of the year which explored how the device can be used in teaching and learning. This training was a combination of staff led training and also that provided by Wriggle (Our IT educational partner) The training focused on areas that were highlighted as a priority as a result of online learning in 2020. Therefore the focus was on the use of onenote and teams.
- Huge effort was placed on ensuring the students and staff could return to school safely and limit the transmission of the virus in our school. This involved remodeling our classes in some cases, adding new one-way systems and entrance and exit points. Students were encouraged to wash their hands as often as possible and to sanitise their hand on entering each class. Students were also taught to take personal responsibility for their learning space and to ensure it was cleaned before they used it. Seating plans were in place during lunch time to ensure we had reliable data when we were asked for contract tracing. Increased covid 19 cases last Sept/ Oct in the community lead to a number of our students testing positive or been considered close contacts. Teachers endeavored to upload classes, recordings, resources and work for students who were self-isolating on Teams. We received fantastic cooperation from parents, staff and students over the past year and I would like to express my thanks for this. We took part in a pilot Covid inspection last December and we are pleased to say that we were commended for all the systems we had in place and received no recommendations from the inspectorate.
- Our School Improvement Plans are available on our school website.
- We continue to evaluate, expand and develop our induction programme with first years. There were increased links to key skills in the Junior Cycle such as 'Managing Myself' 'Working Together' and 'Communication'. Last year we were limited with aspects of this programme as part of the activities were scheduled during lockdown and we were unable to have parents onsite for the various presentations. The students recorded an end of year presentation, and this was sent virtually to parents. We are very conscious that first years have had a difficult transition to secondary school with the multitude of rules and restrictions in place due to public health advice. However, they appear to have settled in well. We are currently using our resources to address any significant deficits due to lockdown.

- Once again both our Junior and Leaving Certificate Results were excellent. 22% of our leaving certificate students received over 500 points. We had four students who received over 600 points and three students who received the maximum of 625 points.

### **Priorities for this year**

- Health and safety continue to be the priority for this year in light of Covid-19.
- Develop a biodiverse area by the Prowles river to be used as an outdoor learning space and increase students level of knowledge on living sustainably and love of our community/planet
- Develop our sensory garden
- Continue to up-skill teachers and students in the use of online teaching and learning.
- Continue to implement our 5 yr strategic plan
- Maintain our high standard of results in state exams and in extra-curricular activities.
- Manage the wellbeing of our staff and students over the coming year.
- Progress our application for major capital works project with the department.

### **Extra Curricular**

In St. Louis we know that education also happens outside the classroom as well as inside. The school was restricted in allowing a number of extracurricular activities to take place due to covid-19. All sporting competitions were suspended.

This year we intend to provide a wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities designed to provide something for everyone.

- It was not possible to stage our ty musical 'Annie'. However we felt this musical was an important learning experience in ty and we worked within the limitations imposed on us regarding singing and social distancing to ensure the girls had some experience of the process. We hope the girls will be able to present a scene or two during our Open day on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November
- Every year group attend a day trip to Tanagh or Lough Muckno at the end of the year for some fun, exercise, and team bonding activities.

Students are encouraged from first year to get involved in all aspects of school life, and we have a wide range of activities to offer.

### **Building**

The Board of Management recognises the importance of continually improving our school building and the internal learning environments.

Last year we made a number of improvements however progress was slow due to covid -19 restrictions:

- A new out-door classroom and seating area is being developed as well as a sensory garden
- We received a Heritage Council grant to refurbish the sash windows on our primary school building. All external windows of the building were painted. A number of classrooms and the second yr corridor and guidance corridor were also painted.
- A new special class for Autism was established. This involved removing walls to create a new larger room to best cater for the needs of the pupils, development of a kitchenette and a sensory room.
- A number of class rooms have received new blinds
- A lot of effort has been put into a large number of small maintenance projects as a result of the information supplied by staff at the end of the year.
- Parts of our school heating pipes have been updated and new radiators provided in the staff room
- The lease of the convent building has provided us with a new reception and front of house. We also have a boardroom, classroom, staffroom and several meeting room and an isolation room contained within the building

### **Board of Management**

This is the final year of the current Board of Management which was formed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. The Board met regularly during the year. All meetings were very well attended and properly conducted. The main items addressed during the year: policy development, ongoing financial monitoring (finance sub-committee), staffing and contracts, curriculum provision, school building, covid -19 and general running of the school as reported by the Principal. The Board have been meeting by Zoom since the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

### **Student Council Report**

Our Students' Council promotes the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school, in co-operation with the Board of Management, parents and teachers. Members of the council are elected from every class group in the school with senior students acting as officers of the council. It consisted of 24 students. School policies under review or for adoption by the school are considered by the council and feedback given to the Principal.

Each year the Council endeavours to initiate something which will benefit the student body. The following is a list and description of activities undertaken by the Student Council during the year.

#### **1. Re-usable Water Bottles**

Last year, following on from the recycling campaign in 2018/2019, the student council decided to try and get rid of single-use plastics in the school. They carried out surveys with students in the school to find out if they would buy a re-usable school water bottle if the

option was available. They were also asked to give their preference on the type of water bottle they would like - size, shape, material, design, etc. The student council contacted a number of companies for sample water bottles last year. In the end, they decided on a 500ml, stainless steel water bottle, with the school crest and students initials on it. The option to buy these bottles was made available to all students in the school at the beginning of this school year – they could purchase them using the Easy Payment option on the school website. A total of 60 bottles were ordered. These arrived in the school in October 2020 and were distributed by the student council. Students who purchased the bottles seemed pleased with the quality and size of them. Next year, they hope to give students the option to purchase this water bottle again. They feel that raising more awareness about the school water bottle around the school as well as online would lead to more students purchasing it.

## **2. St. Louis Network Student Leadership Training Day 1 (October 2020)**

Students received leadership training through the lens of Covid-19 and its impact on our world both locally and globally, paying particular attention to the areas that have impacted most - Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, Work and Economic Growth and Responsible Consumption and Production - all of which are found in Global Goals 3, 4, 8 and 12 and are covered in such subject areas as Geography, Economics, Business Studies, English, Home Economics, Science - to name but a few. This training took place via Zoom. At this training day it was decided that students would undertake a School Leadership Project which they would present at the St. Louis Network Day in March 2021. This project involved peer education (Please see point 10 below for details about this project).

## **3. CPR Training (November 2020)**

Last year, each member of the student council did CPR training with Francie. They felt it was very important and worthwhile for at least one student from each class to know CPR so therefore we continued with this CPR training again this year. Francie took all students to the dome and did 2.5 hours of CPR training with them. The student council hope to continue with this CPR training on a yearly basis.

## **4. St. Louis Network Student Leadership Training Day 2 (November 2020)**

The second part of the Student Leadership Training was a Technology Masterclass, focused on making the best use of Technology for leadership roles within the school, as well as the School Leadership Project that students were working on. This training took place via Zoom.

## **5. Fundraiser for Yemen (December 2020)**

In November 2020, the student council decided that they wanted to organise a Christmas raffle in the school to fundraise for a new defibrillator. However, it was around this time that students became more aware (through television, social media, etc.) about the crisis in Yemen. Students felt strongly about doing something to help those suffering in Yemen. So, the student council began working alongside peer ministers, wellbeing coordinators and management in the school to organise a huge Christmas fundraiser in aid of Yemen. It was decided that each class in the school would come up with their own fundraising initiative.

Each student council member was in charge of raising awareness about their class fundraiser. They had to design a poster about their fundraiser and collect donations from students in their class. This was a very successful initiative – the school raised over 6,000 euro for the Yemen Crisis.

#### **6. Policy Review (January 2021)**

Child Safe Guarding Risk Assessment Policy Review

A copy of this policy was distributed to each member of the student council via teams in January. They were asked to review it and add/amend any items where necessary. Students did so and feedback was given to Karen.

#### **7. St. Louis Network Student Leadership Training Day 3 (Jan 2021)**

The focus of this training day was on Research Methods for the projects students were undertaking and planning to present at the annual St. Louis Schools' Network day in March. This training took place via Zoom.

#### **8. Policy Review (February 2021)**

Distance Learning Policy Review

A copy of this policy was distributed to each member of the student council via teams in February. They were asked to review it and add/amend any items where necessary. Students did so and feedback was given to Karen.

#### **9. Student Wellbeing**

During a meeting with the student council in November 2020, some senior students were concerned about the impact of COVID on students mental health. They felt that some students were going through a more difficult time than others as a result of COVID. Concern was expressed about exam years in particular and the challenges they were facing. The student council wanted to do something to help these students and promote wellbeing around the school. They suggested something simple like putting up wellbeing posters in each classroom with a positive comment/thought on them, easily visible for students to see when they are in class. As well as this, they felt it was important that students were familiar with the various helplines available to them, so they decided to design a poster with a list of all available helplines to put up in each classroom in the school and in the corridors.

#### **10. Student Leadership Project and the St. Louis Network Day (March 2021)**

Students decided to complete their School Leadership Project on the impact of COVID on children's education – with a focus on Sustainable Development Goal 4 'Quality Education'. They wanted to compare the impact of COVID on students' education in the developed world (focusing on Ireland) and the developing world.

In order to find out about the impact of COVID on students' education in the developed world, the student council interviewed a total of 27 students from 1st, 2nd and 3rd year about the impact of COVID on their education. They also wanted to find out how 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students experiences in school differed as a result of COVID.

In order to find out about the impact of COVID on students' education in the developing world, student council members contacted St. Louis Jubilee School in Kumasi (our school is linked to it) with the hope of carrying out interviews with students in their school to find out about the impact of COVID on their education. However, due to time constraints it was not possible to carry out these interviews. Therefore, the student council decided to do their own research online and find out about the impact of COVID on students education in Yemen.

After they gathered all their information, members of the student council began analysing the interview answers from 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years. It was clear that COVID had a significant impact on the quality of students' education in Ireland. There were some positive and negative impacts. They then analysed the information they found online about the impact of CODID on students' education in Yemen. It was clear that CODID also had a major impact on education over there.

Members of the student council put together a PowerPoint Presentation with their findings to present at the St. Louis Network Day in March. Each St. Louis school presented a unique project with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals. The student council here at St. Louis CMX found the day very interesting and informative. Students thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

## **11. Darkness Into Light (May 2021)**

During a student council meeting in April 2021, students reflected on the 2020-21 school year and the challenges faced by everyone as a result of COVID and the impact it has had on people's mental health. They wanted to end the year on a positive note so they decided they would like to encourage the whole school community to get involved in the Darkness Into Light Initiative on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Each student council member informed their class about the initiative and encouraged them to sign up online and take part in any way they could. Students were asked to take a selfie of themselves doing the challenge and forward it to Ms. Maguire. A large cohort of students took part in the initiative.

## **Policy Review**

The following policies were reviewed and introduced last year:

- Child safe guarding statement and risk assessment
- Code of behaviour
- Anti-bullying
- Critical Incident
- Admissions Policy

- Covid -19 Response Plan & Policy
- Distance learning Policy

The following policies will be considered this year:

- Student leadership
- Substance use
- Child safe guarding statement and risk assessment
- Code of behaviour
- Anti-bullying
- Covid -19 Response Plan & Policy

### **Attendance**

Attendance continues to improve in the school. This is in some way related to our attendance strategy plan which we introduced a few years ago.

The main problem areas were after Easter time when we saw a significant drop in attendance among our third and sixth years. Teachers often use the last term to focus on exam technique which students miss if they are absent. Some of the courses in leaving certificate are particularly long and time is needed to complete the course, so we urge you to encourage your daughter to continue to attend regularly in the last term. Last year due to the school closure participation in on line learning was monitored. Any specific issues brought to our attention were followed up with and resolved. A small number of students did not engage as expected during this period.

### **Finance**

The school is in a healthy financial position as is shown in our annual school accounts. These accounts are submitted to Le Chéile and then to the FSSU. These accounts are audited annually. The online payment system is now proving very popular with parents and 90% of parents are using this. This is accessible from our website. In the year ahead we would ask parents continue to use this online system and avoid sending cash to school where possible

### **Enrolment**

Enrolment forms are available to download from our school website, or from our school office. The closing date for Expression of Interest applications is November 12<sup>th</sup> this year. Subject sampling workshops will take place on sat 16<sup>th</sup> October and will be Halloween themed this year. Our open day will be open for students and parents of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November

Assessment tests were postponed due to lockdown and were held at the start of the term this year. One of their main purposes is to identify students who may require additional support in core subjects. We use the cat4 test which gives detailed information on the

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ability range of both the individual student and the overall year group two years ago. Individual feedback will be given to parents at the end of September. Ms Mc Ardle is available if anyone would like to discuss this report with her.

Finally I want to thank all parents and in particular the Parents' Association for your help, support over the last year.

Ms K Patton  
Principal