

Scoil Naomh Iósaf, Baltinglass. Roll No: 20039P.

Board of Management End of Year Report 2022 - 2023

Scoil Naomh Iósaf is a large co-educational school in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow. There are currently 16 classes (two of each class level), two ASD classes, seven teachers for pupils who need support with learning or who have additional needs and two teachers on the Supply Panel. There are 398 pupils currently on roll.

Scoil Naomh Iósaf is a warm and welcoming school with a culture of care and kindness where everyone looks out for each other. The staff pride themselves on having a reputation for academic excellence with a balance of sport, music, wellbeing, drama and culture.

Mission Statement:

Inspired by Catholic values, Scoil Naomh Iósaf strives to create a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment, which, enriches well-being and values happiness, encourages a spirit of inclusivity and respect for everyone in our school community, fosters enquiring minds and kind hearts, promotes excellence in education and cultivates a sense of responsibility for self, society and the environment.

Board of Management Members 2022/2023

Catherine Burke (Chairperson)
Dr. Bernadette Alcock Earley (Parent Representative)
Noel Howard (Parent Representative)
Diane Patterson (Board/Community Representative)
Fionnuala Larkin (Deputy Principal)
Fr. Ger Ahern (Patron's Nominee)
Tom Fox (Board/Community Representative)
Dr. Máiréad Hennessy (Principal)

Board of Management Meetings in the 2022/2023 School Year:

September 21st, 2022, October 27th, 2022 (Via Zoom), November 24th, 2022, February 1st 2023, May 11th 2023, May 30th 2023 (Limited Agenda) and June 26th 2023.

SNI Leadership Team 2022/2023

Mairead Hennessy (Principal), Fionnuala Larkin (Deputy Principal), Martina Gibbons (Assistant Principal 1), Michelle Hannafin (Assistant Principal 1), Joan Murtagh (Assistant Principal 2), Marie Fitzpatrick (Assistant Principal 2), and Clare Owens (Assistant Principal 2)

The Leadership Team of Scoil Naomh Iósaf work collaboratively on curriculum and organisational matters. Throughout the year, the Leadership Team were involved in a Middle Leadership Project with the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) focused on effective meetings and collaboration. The Principal presented an overview of the project at the CSL Forum in the Gresham Hotel in March 2023.

Improvements/Additions to the School Facilities

- The Board are delighted that our new building was fully completed on May 19th, 2023. We greatly appreciate the expertise and advice of McLoughlin Architecture and Nolan Construction who together ensured that we have a fabulous new building with two classrooms for pupils with Autism, a sensory room, life skills area with kitchen, learning support rooms, new toilets and a soft play area for the pupils.
- Our Caretaker, Patsy Barrett keeps the school in great condition and ensures that everything is safe and organised for the staff and pupils. Patsy has sown wildflowers which provide beautiful colour along the boundary walls, has painted classroom and corridors, has repaired taps/sinks/toilets etc. and keeps the grass nicely mowed so the children can play. We are indebted to Patsy for all his work around the school and the grounds.
- Our school is always sparkling clean thanks to the dedication and effort of our three cleaners: Mary Ryan, Mary Murphy and Margaret Wybrant. The Board would like to thank all of our cleaners for ensuring that the school is clean and tidy for staff and pupils. The Board also wish Mary Ryan health and happiness in her retirement and thank her for twenty-nine years of dedicated service to the school.
- The school recently invested in computers for the classrooms and we now have two computer trollies, each with 30 computers for the children to use. We plan to introduce all children to typing, word processing and PowerPoint in the next school year. We also purchased eleven new iPads during the school year.
- The school upgraded the Wi-Fi system throughout the school at a cost of €11,000. This means that the pupils can login to the computers and iPads during class and enjoy using technology to enrich teaching and learning.
- We also invested in class sets of the Jolly Phonics decodable readers for junior infants to second classes.
- Science Boxes (class sets) were purchased for electricity, light and sound, forces, magnetism and materials.
- Our school playground is a wonderful addition to the school and the children have two time slots each week to enjoy the playground and socialise with their friends.
- We also purchased two trampolines for pupils with sensory and additional needs or who need activity to help them self-regulate or simply just have some fun!

Initiatives and Activities

Over the course of the year a wide range of activities and initiatives were provided for the children.

We aim to ensure that there is something for everyone and that the talents and interests of all children are catered for. The following is an overview of the activities provided in the school:

- GAA Coaching every Tuesday and Thursday with coaches Patsy Barrett, Derek Quirke and Cormac Noone.
- Swimming in Athy Pool - first to fifth classes.
- Dance and Drama with Emilie Flanagan - all classes.
- Music Generation - Leslie Dowdall from 'In Tua Nua' engages the children in choral music while Kevin Byrne provides Ukulele lessons for pupils in fourth and fifth classes.

- Small group guitar lessons are available from Music Generation and approximately thirty pupils from second to sixth classes learn the guitar in school each Monday. There is an additional cost for the guitar lessons.
- All classes greatly enjoyed the 'Groovy Hands Drumming Workshop' provided by Dave Morrissey from Limerick
- Forty pupils took part in the Peace Proms in the RDS with the Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland. This was a wonderful evening and greatly enjoyed by the parents and the children. The Peace Proms was organised by Ms. Sile Carr, Ms. Martina Gibbons and Ms. Clare Owens.
- Every class took part in the 'Fit for Fun Bootcamp' organised by Lee Nolan from Naas each week.
- Chess is taught by Tom Hannafin in third to sixth classes. Pupils from fourth to sixth classes who were interested in chess took part in Ficheall.ie tournaments in Crookstown and Naas.
- Literacy Lift Off: Literacy Lift Off took place in first and second classes. The children work in groups and take part in four stations: Familiar Reading, Word Work, Writing and New Reading.
- Dave's Jungle: Pupils had the unique experience of handling and touching a crocodile, tarantulas, scorpions, snakes and large lizards. Dave explains how the animals hunt, use their senses, eat and catch their prey!
- Buddy Reading: During Friendship Week, senior pupils read books with and for the junior classes. Both junior and senior buddies greatly enjoy the experience of reading lovely picture books and novels.
- Concern Debating: Everyone in SNI is super proud of the debating team and all their supportive classmates. The debating team made the final of the Concern Debating Shield competition.
- Credit Union Quiz: Both the Junior and Senior Quiz teams won the Local Credit Union Quiz competition last January and progressed to the Leinster Finals where both teams scored very highly.
- Peace Proms: Our wonderful choir are attended the Peace Proms in the RDS in February. The choir practice every Tuesday and also visited the Hospital and performed for the lighting of the Christmas Tree at Christmas.
- Leinster Badminton Tournament Two teams from SNI are attended the Leinster Badminton Tournament Both teams played brilliantly and the girl's team qualified for the Leinster semi-final.
- Ficheall Chess Tournament: Two teams of 8 pupils from fourth and fifth classes attended Féile Fichille Tournaments in Crookstown and Naas.
- All classes were involved in the Food Dudes initiative for a week in April and sampled lots of different fruit and vegetables.
- Sixth classes walked to the Pinnacle. They explored the Neolithic burial site and the Holy Year Cross (1950) and enjoyed a spectacular view of Baltinglass.
- The Tidy Towns Committee in collaboration with teachers and parents brought the Student Council and third classes to the Lord's Woods for a science and nature exploration of the woods and streams.
- All classes enjoyed their school tours which included trips to Tribraadden Wood, Tayto Park, Pirates Cove, Redhills Adventure Centre and Kia Ora Mini Farm.
- Fourth classes took part in the CUPHaT project in collaboration with UCD. This project is focused on increasing tourism in Coastal Uplands. The classes visited Tomnafinnoge wood and considered aspects of the locality that would be of interest to tourists.

- Sixth class Graduation in June was a wonderful celebration. The sixth class were presented with their Yearbook and Hoodies and read poems that recounted their eight diverse years in SNI. The Graduation Cake was enjoyed by all and fun and laughter filled the hall. We wish all our sixth class pupils every success and happiness in their second level education.
- Hurling was introduced to SNI by Mr. Moran and Ms. James and practice took place after school on Wednesdays. Mr. Moran's fourth class attended their first hurling blitz and had a very successful afternoon.
- All classes from third to sixth had Online Safety workshops facilitated by Barnados.
- Carols for Christmas took place in St. Joseph's Church on December 12th. All classes entertained the audience with Christmas songs and poems. It was a night to remember.

Curriculum Initiatives

- **School Self Evaluation**
 - The staff continued to implement the Literacy School Improvement Plan with a focus on Writing and Comprehension. The school purchased a selection of picture books for each class to help the pupils learn about the different comprehension strategies, literary techniques and for enjoyment.
 - The staff also evaluated teaching and learning in Maths. Overall, our Standardised Test Results are excellent. Our pupil survey revealed that 57% of pupils like/love Maths and find Maths interesting. A small percentage (12%) found maths challenging. Pupils enjoyed maths games and using concrete materials. They used lots of different ways to solve word problems and felt that maths is an important skill to develop.
 - Following our school self-evaluation in Maths, the staff collated the evidence and wrote a report on Maths teaching in SNI which outlines our strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Involvement with the NCCA in relation to the New Primary Curriculum Framework.**
 - Representatives from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and Hub na nÓg worked with a focus group of children from second to sixth classes. They were interested in hearing the pupil's thoughts and opinions on SPHE and PE and what they felt should be included in the revised curriculum for those subjects. The children's input will be used to inform NCCA planning for the revised PE and SPHE curricular areas.
- **Buddy Maths**
 - Buddy Maths was introduced in April 2023 to focus on playful learning in the maths class and the use of concrete materials. Initially Buddy Maths was piloted in senior infants with fourth class buddies facilitating five maths stations. Buddy Maths was subsequently undertaken by all classes.
- **Hub in the Hall**
 - Hub in the Hall was devised as an opportunity for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) to enjoy an immersive English Language experience in a safe and welcoming environment. The focus is on conversation, socialisation, consolidation of basic English grammar, active listening, storytelling and the early writing process.
- **The New Primary Curriculum Framework**

- The staff engaged in training following the publication of the New Primary Curriculum Framework. This training focused on the vision, aims, Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, the Key Competencies, the Curriculum Areas and Subjects and Time Allocations. The staff also focused on Thematic teaching and Disciplinary Literacy.

School Policies Reviewed and Updated

School Policies reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management include the following:

- Child Safeguarding
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Attendance
- Fire Safety Policy
- Religious Education Policy
- Critical Incident Policy, and
- Acceptable Use Policy.

Attendance

Overall attendance in SNI was at 90% with a significant number of pupils missing over 20 days (four weeks) from school. The Board of Management plan to focus on school attendance in the 2023/2024 school year with a view to increasing attendance across the school. We understand that children need to stay at home when they are unwell, but we urge parents to send children to school unless they are really unwell.

Parents' Association

The Board of Management would like to sincerely thank the Parents' Association for all their hard work this year on behalf of the school. The PA decorated the school for Halloween and Christmas, had a very successful bake sale in February and organised the Sponsored Walk in June in collaboration with the school staff. Over the course of the year, the PA organised Hot-Dog day, a firm favourite with the children, selection boxes at Christmas, a visit from Santa and Easter Eggs for Easter! We are indebted to all the parents on the PA who willingly give of their time so generously to support the school.

Summer Programme 2022

Our school summer programme was very successful. In July both ASD classes attended the summer programme while 36 children from various classes across the school attended in August. The programme's aims are to support pupils' ongoing engagement with education, to build their confidence and increase their motivation, promote wellbeing and help to ensure they can progress to their planned educational placement next September along with their peers. Over the course of the programme, the children enjoyed sports events, trips to Castledermot Playground and Tribe Art Studio, a visit from Dave's Jungle and a trip to Castlecomer Discovery Park.