

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

Board of Management End of Year Report 2023 - 2024

Scoil Naomh Iósaf is a large co-educational school in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow. There are currently 16 classes (two of each class level), three ASD classes, seven teachers for pupils who need support with learning or who have additional needs, a teacher for children for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) and two teachers on the Supply Panel. There are 390 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 2023/2024

Catherine Burke (Chairperson)
Clare O'Toole (Parent Nominee)
Fabian Dunne (Parent Nominee)
Diane Patterson (Community Representative)
Fionnuala Larkin (Teacher Nominee)
Fr. Ger Ahern (Patron's Nominee)
Kieran Alcock (Community Representative)
Dr. Máiréad Hennessy (Principal)

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

The Board of Management was constituted in December 2023 and will be in operation until November 2027. Meetings were held on: September 26th 2023 (Old Board); October 19th 2023 (Old Board – via Zoom: Limited Agenda); November 22nd 2023 (Old Board final meeting). January 9th 2024, February 6th 2024; May 21st 2024, May 30th 2024 – (via Zoom: Limited Agenda); June 26th 2024

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), Michelle Mooney (Assistant Principal 2) and Sarah Delaney (Acting Assistant Principal 2)

The Leadership Team of Scoil Naomh Iósaf work collaboratively on curriculum and organisational matters.

Whole School Evaluation

Scoil Naomh Iósaf had a Whole School Evaluation of Teaching, Learning, Leadership and Management on October 5th – 8th 2023. The Inspectorate issued the report to the school and this is published online

and available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/school-report/y8l3js-/> The Board of Management are extremely pleased with the whole school evaluation which endorsed the high quality of teaching and learning, the highly effective leadership team and the excellent support provided for pupils with additional needs. The Inspectorate praised the warm and welcoming school atmosphere and the many activities and initiatives undertaken by the school. They were also very impressed with how pupil voice is actively sought and listened to. The staff were extremely pleased with the excellent report on our school. The School/Board of Management Response to the Inspector's report is published at the end of the Inspector's report.

Official Opening of Réalta

On Tuesday the 18th of June, Scoil Naomh Iósaf, marked the official opening of Réalta, our new building dedicated to autistic classes and pupils with additional needs, along with our state-of-the-art playground. The school principal Dr. Mairéad Hennessy welcomed Bishop Denis Nulty to officiate at the official opening and the blessing of Réalta classes and playground. Other guests included our architect Mel McLoughlin who designed the building and brought it to fruition in association with Tom Nolan Construction. The ceremony included speeches and presentations attended by fifth and sixth class students, parents and school staff in the sports hall. Throughout the ceremony the school choir performed their version of "We Are One". Our talented Irish dancers demonstrated their amazing skills in dancing through their performance and our fabulous traditional band played a melody of Irish tunes. Following the presentations, Bishop Denis Nulty, Fr. Ger Ahern P.P., staff, members of the Board of Management, the Parents Association, Réalta pupils and invited guests proceeded to the playground for the blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Improvements/Additions to the School Facilities

- The Department of Education is considering an additional accommodation request submitted by the Board. This includes, the re-configuration of three current classrooms as an autism class and four learning support classrooms and the provision of three modular classrooms with toilets to the back of the school.
- 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 Murphy, Margaret Wybrant and Natalia Bielinski. The Board would like to thank all of our cleaners for ensuring that the school is clean and tidy for staff and pupils.

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 Fernando provides Ukulele lessons for pupils in fourth and fifth classes.
- Small group guitar lessons are available from Music Generation teacher Fernando. There is an additional cost for the guitar lessons.
- Third to sixth classes greatly enjoyed the 'Groovy Hands Drumming Workshop' provided by Dave Morrisey from Limerick
- Forty pupils took part in the Peace Proms in Waterford 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. Martina Gibbons and Ms. Clare Owens.
- Third to sixth classes enjoyed the BrickFlicks Animation workshops provided by Dave Sheehan from BrickFlicks Academy.
- 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.
- 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 from infants to second classes 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 won the Concern Debating final in Kildare and progressed to the Leinster stage.
- Credit Union Quiz: Both the Junior and Senior Quiz teams won the Local Credit Union Quiz competition last January and progressed to Chapter Level where both teams scored very highly.
- Peace Proms: Our wonderful choir are attended the Peace Proms in Waterford in February. The choir practice every Tuesday and also visited the Hospital and performed for the lighting of the Christmas Tree at Christmas.
- 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 May and sampled lots of different fruit and vegetables.
- All classes enjoyed their school tours which included trips to Tribraadden Wood, Tayto Park, Pirates Cove, Redhills Adventure Centre and Kia Ora Mini Farm.
- Sixth class Graduation on June 26th June was a wonderful celebration. The sixth class were presented with their Yearbook and all pupils wrote thank you letters to the special people in their lives. 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 and football continued in SNI and after school practices were organised by Mr. Walshe, Mr. Moran and Ms. Phelan.
- 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 16th. All classes entertained the audience with Christmas songs and poems. It was a night to remember.

Curriculum Initiatives

- **School Self Evaluation**
 - The focus this year was on the achievement of our second Gaelbhratach in line with the implementation of our Gaeilge School improvement plan. Thanks to Marie Fitzpatrick, Orla Maher, Elizabeth O’Neill, Clare Owens and the Coiste Gaelbhratach who worked tirelessly over the year to achieve our second Gaelbhratach. Activities included Tomás na hÓrdóige –fairy tales in conjunction with Abair liom, Gaelgóir na Seachtaine, Nuacht an Lae - gach lá, Deir O Gradaigh, Rannta Scipéala, Cairde ag léamh, Leabhair Mhóra – scéal amháin i rith an coicise, Dramaíocht i ngach rang, Seachtaine na Gaeilge – cúirigí gach rud and bígí and an Dreoilín, our whole school dance performed on Lá Glas.
- **SSE Maths: Buddy Maths**
 - Buddy Maths was introduced in April 2023 to focus on playful learning in the maths class and the use of concrete materials. Buddy Maths was implemented in all classes this year.
- **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 Maths Curriculum**
 - 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 and Plans 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
- Critical Incident Policy,
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Attendance
- Assessment
- Acceptable Use Policy.
- Gaeilge Plan
- Science Plan
- History and Geography Plans
- Maths Plan

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 continue 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. The Educational Welfare Officer is working with the school and families to ensure that all pupils are in school as much as possible.

School Ethos

Scoil Naomh Iosaf is an inclusive, welcoming Catholic school. We welcome children of every faith and those who have a different way of living in the world. The dignity of every person is respected and we promote the holistic development of each child (intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual), including a healthy relationship with themselves, other people and the rest of creation. where children all faiths and non are welcome. We proudly live our mission statement and this was noted by the Inspectorate in our Whole School Evaluation. The Board watched the CPSMA Video 'Living Our Ethos' and discussed the contents in light of 'Living Our Ethos – How are we Doing' checklist. The Grow in Love programme is taught in the school and pupils are taught an understanding of many different faiths and ways of living.

Standardised Test Results

The school administers the Sigma-T Maths Standardised Test and the Micra-T New Level Standardised Test for English. Overall our results are above the normal distribution and National norms. 70.3% of pupils from first to sixth classes achieved a Sten of 5 or higher in English while 77% of pupils received a Sten of 5 or higher in Maths. The results of the standardised tests in second, fourth and sixth classes were uploaded on Esinet, the Department of Education Portal.

HSA Inspection

David O'Connell from the Health and Safety Authority undertook a health and safety inspection of the school and grounds on 23/04/2024. Overall, he was very pleased with the protocol and procedures for health and safety across the school. He made a number of recommendations , including, that the risk assessments be reviewed and updated annually, all classrooms to have an evacuation plan, ensure all emergency exits are free, and that the safety statement must include a section on 'Control of Contractors'.

Parents' Association

The Board of Management and school staff would like to sincerely thank the Parents' Association for all their hard work this year on behalf of the school. In particular we would like to thank the hard working Buy-A-Brick Committee who worked tirelessly to raise €30,000 towards our school playground. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported our "Buy A Brick" fundraiser. We are extremely grateful to our sponsors – friends, families, businesses, community members, past pupils and teachers and individuals who felt a connection to the school. All names are on the brick wall at the main Réalta entrance. Your generosity has enabled us to raise €30,000 towards the cost of the playground, which is enjoyed by all pupils in our 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 2023

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, a visit from Dave's Jungle, drumming workshops and a trip to Castlecomer Discovery Park.

Finally, on behalf of the whole school staff, I would like to thank the Board of Management and the Parents' Association for their dedication to the school and for their ongoing commitment to supporting Scoil Naomh Iosaf, the pupils and the staff.

Dr. Mairead Hennessy (Principal)