

Report of the Board of Management on the operation of St. Tola's N.S.

for the 2017/2018 School Year

www.tolasns.com

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As the 2017/2018 school year comes to a close the Board of Management is pleased to publish its annual report on the operation of St. Tolas's. This report complements the weekly newsletters sent home over the course of the year which are available on www.tolasns.com

The 2017/2018 year has been very busy and a lot has been achieved. Our school website www.tolasns.com is a great location to learn about the school and we urge you to visit it for the latest information on what we do.

The Board of Management wishes to thank our teaching staff, Special Needs assistants, secretary and caretaker for their work over the past year and for all they have done for our pupils. We also extend our thanks to the Parents' Association for their wonderful support of the school staff in so many ways. It has been a busy year but it is wonderful to see how much the pupils have progressed in that time. We wish you well for a safe and enjoyable summer holiday and we look forward to the new school year which begins on Wednesday 29th Aug 2018.

Yours sincerely,

P.J. Burke , Chairperson

Mary Dunlea Fitzgerald,

Board of Management 2017/2018

Chairperson.....P.J. Burke
Treasurer.....Richard Stapleton
Principal Teacher.....Mary Dunlea Fitzgerald
Teacher Nominee.....Edel Halliday
Parent Nominee.....Dara O' Callaghan
Parent Nominee.....Nicole Hennehopf
Community Nominee.....Cathy Colgan
Community Nominee.....John Quinlivan

Curriculum Developments

Literacy: A new primary language Curriculum has been implemented in Juniors-2nd classes this year. At infant level the focus has been on oral language development. The Aistear programme has been a great help in this regard as the pupils have engaged in structured play activities using a variety of themes. This will continue into next year where the school will take on language development as a focus for School Self Evaluation. In Senior Infants, 1st and 2nd classes we have been using the Literacy Lift Off programme and are very pleased with the progress made by the pupils.

Guided reading is used in many classes where pupils receive small group instruction using a variety of texts. The aim with this method is to ensure pupils are reading at their instructional level so that they can experience success with reading. This has been very beneficial for 3rd and 4th class pupils in particular this year as they have moved reading instruction to this model. These literacy approaches will continue for the coming school year.

From 3rd-6th class the pupils use the Accelerated Reading programme to develop their fluency and comprehension skills in reading and to enhance their ability to read independently. At all class levels comprehension strategies are taught explicitly

For writing teachers are ensuring that pupils are taught a variety of written genres throughout the year in each class.

Numeracy: The focus in terms of Mathematics has been to continue to develop pupils' ability in all areas of the maths curriculum. In addition to the general teaching of Mathematics, we have introduced the team-teaching approach using *Mata sa Rang* with our Infants, 1st and 2nd classes where the support teachers provide intensive, early intervention to the pupils alongside the class teacher. This year the teachers have developed maths cards that can be used at home for pupils to practise their maths strategies. We thank our parents for their help and support with this initiative.

STEAM : (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) Three staff have been involved in a project with Clare Education Centre on developing our approaches to teaching these subjects. The pupils in 3rd and 4th classes have taken part in a number of workshops where the pupils take a hands on problem solving approach across the subjects.

Reporting of Attainment Results: Standardised testing in Maths and English took place for pupils in 1st-6th classes in May. The Department of Education and Skills obliges all schools to report on attainment results in English and Maths for all pupils in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes. St. Tola's reports the results to parents for all pupils from 1st to 6th classes and these will be made available by means of the annual summer reports.

Attendance: Following consultation with staff members and the Parents Association the Board of Management developed an attendance strategy at the start of the current school year. This has been a success as the number of pupils who have missed 20 days or more has significantly improved on last year. We thank all our parents/guardians who have informed us when pupils are absent. There are still a small number of pupils for whom there are concerns with their attendance. The school has developed a good relationship with the Educational welfare officer and she will work with the school in supporting these pupils and their families to improve their attendance.

School Ethos: We thank all the parents of pupils in 2nd and 6th classes who supported the Sacramental preparation this year. A special word of thanks to parents and relatives who helped make the respective ceremonies such wonderful, reverential occasions. Thank you to the Parents' Association and the parents of the pupils in 3rd class who helped organise the Communion breakfast after the First Communion ceremony. Thank you to the many staff members who came along to support the pupils at both First Communion and Confirmation ceremonies.

Our annual Catholic Schools week took place at the end of January. Our Grandparents' Day was a huge success and it was great to see so many grandparents able to attend this celebration. It means a lot to the pupils to see their grandparents here on this day but we are also mindful of grandparents who cannot join us too.

School Buildings: Last summer the Board of Management organised for upgrades to be carried out on the toilets in five classrooms. This involved putting in new flooring and sanitary ware as well as painting and redecorating. This means that all classroom toilets have now been upgraded in recent years. A new storage press was also installed in one classroom and there are plans to install a second one over the summer.

Safety: The car park remains an area of concern for all in the school community. We urge all parents using the car park to do so with utmost caution and remember that small children can be hard to see. Parents should use the car park spaces if they are accompanying children into the school rather than parking in the middle of the car park and causing an obstruction. The Gardai have informed us that parents may park on the road as long as they do not cause an obstruction if there are no spaces available.

Parents' Association: The Parents' Association have provided huge support to the school again this year. They are always available to help out and we urge all parents to support them. They organised cake sales, a Christmas raffle, school calendars, Easter raffle and the Communion breakfast. Once again this year they donated €1500 towards the cost of the buses for school tours which reduced the cost of the school tour for every pupil. They also helped 6th class organise a cake sale to go towards covering the cost of the trip to Mullingar for the All Ireland finals of the Féile Dramaíochta. The principal also consulted with the Parents Association in relation to the Attendance Strategy and when updating the Child Protection policy. We thank them most sincerely for their efforts.

Fundraising : We had a great evening at the Halloween Table Quiz when families came along and dressed up in fancy dress for an evening of fun We sincerely thank all families who supported this event. We also thank the staff members who gave up their time to organise and help out at the Halloween Table Quiz.

Extra-Curricular Activities: Over the course of the school year pupils from various classes took part in training in hurling, camogie, football, basketball and athletics. We had great success in inter school competitions this year with both our girls and boys teams winning many of their matches. In addition some pupils were involved in the Clare Primary schools Quiz and in the Credit Union quiz. They also practised during lunchtime. We thank all staff members who gave up their lunchtimes or time after school to organise these activities for our pupils. It is greatly appreciated.

Active Schools: We began our work towards earning our second Active Schools flag this year. For the final term each class has been running/walking laps in a bid to cover the distance around Ireland which is 1777km! It is amazing to see how the pupils' fitness has improved over the past few weeks. We have also been fortunate to have had coaching in Fundamental Movement skills from both Clare GAA and Wolfe Tones GAA. 5th class also received a 6 week programme on Cycle training and Road Safety which was supported by Clare County Council and An Taisce. We look forward to completing the work needed in the next school year to achieve our Active Flag.

ICT in school: 1st-6th classes get to use the laptops weekly. In 3rd and 5th class pupils get an opportunity to use the Lego kits and to develop their coding skills with the Lego. The school is in the process of purchasing additional laptops for use in all classes. Work was also carried out in updating the school server. It is intended to purchase additional laptops for pupils use and these will be available for the next school year.

Choir/Music: We were very fortunate this year to be part of a fundraising effort for the Burren Chernoble Children's Project. Pupils in 4th-6th classes sang on a CD with pupils from St. Conaires N.S. and volunteers from the charity. The single The Wonder of You went to number 1 on the Easy Listening downloads on iTunes. It was a great experience for the pupils who attended the launch in Skycourt Shopping centre last December. We also went carol singing in Skycourt shopping centre before Christmas. Our choir also sang at the First Communion ceremony this year and their singing enhanced the celebration.

Drama : Our annual Christmas concert was a great success again this year. This long standing tradition in St. Tolas sees every class putting on a short play before the Christmas holidays. It was wonderful to see so many parents and family members come along this year to support the pupils.

6th class took part in the Féile Drámaíochta competition this year with their play as Gaeilge *Annie agus Oliver*. The pupils got to perform their play in Glór in Ennis in the Clare final and the Munster final. They then qualified for the All Ireland final and travelled to Mullingar to perform. This was a fantastic achievement as most of the schools in the All Ireland were either Gaelscoileanna or schools from the Gaeltacht

We wish all our pupils in 6th class who are moving on to secondary school all the best for the future.

SCHOOL CALENDAR - Please see www.tolasns.com for a list of all dates for the school year 2018/19

Best wishes to all pupils, parents and staff for a happy, enjoyable and safe summer break.