

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 2018/2019 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 augments the weekly newsletters sent home over the course of the year which are available on www.tolasns.com

As usual the school year 2018/19 has been a particularly busy year. It has also been the year we celebrated the 40th anniversary of St. Tola's National School we celebrated in style with a variety Concert and a photo exhibition with memories from the last 40 years of the school. . 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 out 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 Thursday 29th Aug 2019.

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 : We place great importance on literacy learning in St. Tola's as it is the bedrock on which so much learning across the curriculum is built. Over the past two school years the revised primary Language curriculum has been implemented from Junior Infants- 2nd class. From next year this curriculum will be extended to 3rd-6th classes. Senior Infants, 1st class and 2nd class all benefitted from a six week block of Literacy Lift Off. We are gratified that we are seen as leading the way among schools in our region in Literacy Lift and teachers from a number of schools have visited us to see the programme in operation. All pupils made gains in reading and writing as a result of Literacy Lift off. We also had a number of pupils in Senior infants and 1st class benefit from Reading Recovery which is an individualised programme designed to support struggling readers before the gap between them and their peers becomes too wide. For the next school year we will be able to add to the number of pupils who can take part in Reading Recovery as we have been successful in our application to have a second teacher trained in this approach.

This year we also introduced an Oral language initiative into Senior Infants to improve pupils' vocabulary . This programme is called Talkboost and training was provided by the Speech and Language therapists in the H.S.E. Again the early results show significant gains in the vocabulary of the pupils who took part and we will continue with this programme into the next school year.

In the senior end of the school the focus is on enhancing pupils vocabulary through explicit teaching of vocabulary and through reading and writing activities. Guided reading has proven very effective in 3rd and 4th classes while in the senior end of the school we have introduced book club where pupils work in small groups on a variety of novels and explore them through questioning, identifying new vocabulary and through using their comprehension strategies. This approach involves the pupils being active in their own learning and the pupils have found it quite enjoyable.

In all classes a variety of writing genres have been taught with pupils making good progress in writing across the curriculum also.

School Self Evaluation: The focus chosen for School Self Evaluation has been Acquisition and Use of Vocabulary. The in school management team have benefitted from inputs from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) with an advisor meeting with them on a number of occasions throughout the year. All classes have identified a number of strategies to enhance the teaching of vocabulary in both English and Gaeilge. We look forward to building on the work done this year for the coming school year.

Gaeilge: The focus this year has been on improving pupils' spoken Gaeilge. This culminated in a very successful Seachtain na Gaeilge with every class doing a short performance as gaeilge for the school. Every class also learnt the song and dance for An Dreoilín and this was performed in the school hall.

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 continued a 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 further 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 since last year. In November we held a showcase where every class got to show a project they had worked on to pupils from all other classes. We had such diverse projects as pupils designed and made lavalamps, powered vehicles, bridge designs, a wormery and much more. This brought the area of STEAM alive to the pupils in a very real way.

Reporting of Attainment Results: Standardised testing in Maths and English took place for pupils in 1st-6th classes in May. This year the school changed to Drumcondra Reading Tests to assess pupils' performance in reading. This is a newly developed test and has been standardised just last year. It also gives the school data on vocabulary and comprehension which is very helpful in monitoring our School Self Evaluation Improvement plan. 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 added to the attendance strategy developed last year.. This has been a success as the number of pupils who have missed 20 days or more has again 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. We thank our school choir who supported the sacramental classes at both First Communion and Confirmation this year. Thank you to the pupils themselves who represented their families and school so well at both ceremonies. 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.

40th Anniversary of St. Tola's : The current school year marked a milestone in the history of our school as we celebrated 40 years. This event was marked by a fantastic Christmas Variety Show held over two nights in December. 3rd to 6th classes put on an extravaganza of plays, sketches, musical acts and of course magnificent performances from our school choir. Who could fail to be moved by the sight and sound of so many children singing together and making such a wonderful sound. We thank the many families who supported this night by buying tickets, supporting the raffle and donating spot prizes. We also thank the Parents Association who organised and ran the tuck shop on both nights. To mark our anniversary the Board of Management has committed to fundraise to redevelop the front yard. It is hoped to install an astro turf/allweather section to be used for sports and breaktimes and also to improve the upper yard area. Our Christmas concert kickstarted the fundraising but we still have a lot to raise to get to our €50,000 goal.

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. Just recently the Parents Association presented the school with a cheque for €2000 to go towards the yard redevelopment fund. 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.

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 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:

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 purchased additional laptops for use in all classes. Work was also carried out in updating the school server.

Choir/Music: Pupils from 3rd-6th classes participated in the Peace Proms concert in Limerick where they got the opportunity to sing with the CrossBorder Orchestra of Ireland and pupils from schools all over the mid-west and beyond. This was a fantastic opportunity for the pupils and we thank all the teachers involved in the choir for their hard work and dedication in preparing and accompanying the pupils on the night. We also thank the choir for their support at both First Communion and Confirmation ceremonies this year.

Drama : Our Junior Infants, Senior infants 1st and 2nd classes put on a lovely Christmas concert with each class performing a short play. It is great to see every pupil on stage. We thank our parents and family members who came along to support our pupils. It is greatly appreciated.

As we come to the end of another school year we wish all our pupils in 6th class who are moving on to secondary school all the best for the future. We hope that they will bring the two most important rules in St Tolas with them – Be Kind and Try your Best!

SCHOOL CALENDAR - Please see www.tolasns.com for a list of all dates for the school year 2019/20

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