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Principal's Annual Report (2018-2019) to Parents' Advisory Council AGM

Significant Developments over the past year:

- Our IT curriculum for all first years was rolled out again in 2018-19 and has been hugely successful. This initiative will continue for all first-year classes this year with the objective of equipping students with all necessary skills to complete CBAs in second and third year and to create and manage Digital Portfolios.
- 33 students sat the Youth Chinese Test Level 1 (YCT1). These students are in TY and Fifth Year. 7 Leaving Cert students sitting the YCT2 exam. The latter sat the YCT1 exam last year and had the choice to sit the Level 2 exam this year. After all their hard work, students at both levels receive an internationally recognised result certificate from the UCD Confucius Institute.
- Google classroom has been rolled out in the school as part of our on-going digital learning development and all students have a Loreto Mullingar g mail address that allows access to homework, notes and shared information from their teachers.
- The CAT 4 was administered digitally to all first-year students last September and parents were issued with a comprehensive report on their daughters' talents and learning strengths.
- Results
Leaving Certificate results were distributed to 125 girls on Tuesday 13 August. Results were very well received by students and teachers.
Statistics show a steadily improving trend over the past five years:
The percentage of students achieving 300+ points has risen from 52% in 2015 to 59% in 2016 to 68% in 2017 65% in 2018 to 78.4% this year. From another perspective, those achieving 400+ points have risen from 26% to 36% to 39% to 42.5% to 52% over the last five years.
The results were excellent this year and it was generally agreed that the class group achieved above expectations.

We take pride in the academic success of our graduates but also in their ability to be active responsible global citizens. Congratulations to all students and teachers on these achievements.

Junior Cert results will be issued on Friday 4 October.

Our Annual Awards Ceremony will take place on Friday 18 October where we will honour the academic achievements of our students for the last academic year.

- New Teachers
Aoife O'Rourke - Gaelge;
Stephen Quirke - Maths;
- Very successful trips to Paris, and our exchange school in Gunzburg, Germany took place during the year. The second London Science trip also took place. Students from Germany and their teachers will make the return visit to us in March 2020.
- The Library is nearing completion and we are indebted to Mullingar Rotary Club, Mullingar Credit Union and the Parents' Advisory Council who gave us significant financial assistance towards the completion of the project.

Enrolment

Our first-year enrolment has remained steady at 150 students and total enrolment stands at 852 students.

- I wish to confirm to parents that the school is fully compliant in terms of Child protection and GDPR legislation and that all mandatory policies are available on our website.
- School Improvement Plan – Phase 4

The focus is on the key skill of 'managing myself' with a strong emphasis on Wellbeing. Key areas of this plan focus on using digital technology to organise work, student and teacher reflection and student responsibility for their own learning journey. This is part of a four-year plan which aims to develop responsible and reflective learners.

TEACH MEET

Sharing practice meetings have been taking place where teachers volunteer to meet and share methodologies and different tips to improve and enhance teaching and learning. The initiative was spearheaded last year by Sinead Lawlor and is now being developed further by Ms Audrey Hanlon and is proving very popular and beneficial.

Professional conversations at these meetings are very rich and teachers are welcome to come along without necessarily having a particular idea to share.

These meetings will hopefully develop further where teachers will visit each other's classrooms to observe the different skills, tips and methodologies in action.

Curriculum Development

A new Curriculum Planning Group has been formed to look at various aspects of the curriculum including the possibility of introducing one-hour classes and making changes to subject options at Junior Cycle.

Curriculum Planning working group: the working group has been looking at the current curriculum being offered and whether this needs to change e.g. do we need to offer more choice subjects? Do we need to change the number of subjects currently being studied for Junior Cycle?

Other Initiatives:

Class Olympics

Digital Strategy update

Homework Policy Review

- Finance:

Finance remains a major concern and the ever-increasing costs of heat and power as well as maintenance and cleaning of the building pose ongoing problems in terms of day to day expenses and general maintenance. There has been no increase in capitation for many years and there are no plans to restore capitation grants to pre-recession levels. Because of inequities in funding, it is unfortunate that voluntary secondary schools like ours need to ask parents for voluntary contributions to fund the basic day to day running of our schools. The most recent figures show a drop of €5,000 in voluntary contributions for each of the past two academic years.

- Supervised Study

Over the past number of years and in consultation with the Parents' Advisory Committee, the school has committed to the provision of supervised study after school. There was an excellent uptake from all year groups and study will hopefully continue throughout the new school year. The uptake for this year is in the region of seventy students. Supervised study is available from 4.15pm to 6.45pm on Monday to Thursday at a cost of €15 per week, payable per term, in advance. Supervised study is also being offered on Friday from 1.30 to 3.30pm.

- Transition Year was a huge success last year with the highlight being the production of 'Back to the Eighties. Eighty-three students opted for TY in the last academic year and that number has risen to 96 for this year. November will see our production of 'High School Musical' on stage with the assistance of TY students from Coláiste Mhuire.
- Posts of Responsibility have been restored and have made a huge difference to the efficient running and development of the school.

Annual Awards Ceremony took place on Friday 19 October in the Concert Hall at 8pm to honour the excellent academic achievements of the various classes in 2017-2018. Our special guest was Pauline Nally, past pupil who works with Midlands Science and has been very generous with learning opportunities for the girls here.

We were delighted to welcome back last year's very successful Leaving Cert class, many of whom have been awarded academic scholarships including Maynooth University Entrance Scholarship Eabha Lawlor and the All-Ireland Scholarship sponsored by JP and Noreen McManus for Arisha Ali and Marta Geszczak. Since the awards night, we have received notification of further entrance scholarships for our students – Arisha Ali, Julie Gannon, Marta Geszczak and Molly Moore for UCD and Malaika Nasir for Trinity College. Special thanks are due to Olivia Callaghan who took on her new role at a very busy time, with great assistance from Fidelma Murphy.

Health Promoting Schools –

In the lead up to Christmas holidays we promoted the "5 days of FITmas" HPS students announced a theme for each day. 1. Give (your time), 2. Connect (with others), 3. Take Notice (of the world around you), 4. Keep Learning (learn something new) 5. Be Active (move your body)

Before Christmas we received the Irish Heart Foundation CPR for Schools Certificate for training all staff and students in CPR, and we received the Healthy Heart Schools Canteen Award in conjunction with Juice Zone.

Loreto College Mullingar was the first school in the country to receive both awards!

On January 9th we met with Irish Heart Foundation Sli@School coordinator and have mapped 5 walking routes that we would like to promote for everyone to use around the school and on the canal. There are now two big display boards with the routes, time taken to walk them, steps, and distance for each. We welcome feedback and suggestions for other smaller, motivating signs that we could display around the school.

The Students' Council had a very successful year. As their first project they chose to work in conjunction with the sixth-year Development Education students. Together, the two groups decided they would raise money for LARCC.

Festive Friday was arranged as a result. Students were invited to wear their own clothes on the day as well as coming to the GP area to enjoy a hot chocolate and each other's company. The event was very successful. It was great to see everybody engaged and talking. As a result, €2,150 was raised. Sr Anna and Fionnuala Brennan (6th year) spoke very personally on the intercom about their experiences with LARCC and this was the main reason that we raised so much money. As a result, Fionnuala will feature on Winning Streak on Saturday night (19 January) when the programme will highlight the marvellous work being done in the LAARC Centre.

The next project the Council will undertake is their community-based mural. Thanks to Mullingar Credit Union for its generous sponsorship 'Tea & Talk' (mobile-free) has been divided into a junior and senior group because of its popularity and space constraints. Students are asked to bring their own mug to avoid the use of disposable cups.

Student positions of leadership:

Student leaders had a day of training and reflection in Athlone IT to mark the end of their year's work in the school. This new initiative to build leadership capacity was a huge success and the teachers and students involved found the day both enjoyable and challenging.

Music

The Sound of Unity Concert took place in January in Mullingar Park Hotel with all proceeds going to local charities

Summer Projects 2019

Work was completed on:

- Wi-Fi – outside B14, C3, C8 and new trolleys. New digital equipment. Some new computers teacher's workroom. Laptop in Library, new printers
- New carpets and paint in classrooms on B and C corridor.
- Study Hall was painted (and Perspex attached to the study wall).
- Home Economics Kitchen 1 has a new oven and other repair work completed.
- 90 new desks for delivery at the end of September;
- Library: new cushions, shelves and new name!
- Lockers in teacher's workroom for those without a classroom.
- In our on-going programme of refurbishment 15 new locker units (30 lockers) were purchased for one of the locker rooms at a cost of €4,000;

2019 -20 (so far) Teaching & Learning

SSE – Audrey Hanlon gave a summary to staff of our progress through School Self Evaluation over the past number of years from Literacy to Numeracy to Teaching & Learning (AfL) to our current focus on ‘Managing myself and Reflection’.

Robert Masterson gave a presentation to staff following his attendance at ‘STEAM in Junior Cycle’. He has also secured a 3D printer for the school.

The school will sponsor the attendance of four teachers at Graham Powell seminars on ‘Building Learning Power’.

The Principal, Deputy Principal Carmel O’Grady, Neil Garry and Sinéad Uí Dhroma are undertaking the Forbairt programme this year and are hoping to focus on Digital strategy linking with SSE.

Staff

All the activities and achievements outlined in this report are only possible because of the huge commitment and spirit of generosity that is endemic among all staff members here in Loreto College. All aspects of sporting and other extra-curricular activities are reported to the Parents’ Advisory Council at the monthly meetings.

Appreciation

The school is hugely appreciative of the work undertaken by the parent nominees on the Board of Management. The commitment and involvement of Ms Mary Reilly and Mr Paul Moore is very much appreciated and their personal support to me has been immense. Special thanks to the officers, Chairperson Sally Ann O’Donnell, Secretary Irene Fallon and Treasurer Charlotte Maguire and all members of the committee for their involvement in the Parents’ Advisory Council over several years.

I would particularly like to mention the huge commitment of Tracy Johnston who was wholeheartedly involved in two major fund-raising events for the school, who worked on the HPS Committee and was instrumental in the refurbishment of our Leaving Cert Recreation Room and who also served as Secretary to the PAC.

I look forward to working with the new committee during the next academic year.

I record my thanks, appreciation and congratulations to the PAC on the phenomenal success of the Rachel Allen Cookery Demonstration on Thursday 25 October 2019. It was a very enjoyable event and the huge efforts paid off with a profit in the region of €14,000. The response of the committee was overwhelming and the commitment to the school was both heartening and humbling.

I take this opportunity to thank all parents for their support of the school and its development. I urge you to maintain a strong involvement in school life as we continue in partnership to provide the best possible educational opportunities for our girls.

Marése Bell
Principal

19 September 2019