



St. Raphaela's Secondary School

Parents' Association

Chairperson: Clare McIntyre
Treasurer: Grainne O'Neill
Secretary: Kathleen Fahey

Minutes of Annual General Meeting Tuesday 13th October 2015

Present: Parents. Clare McIntyre (chairing) Eileen O' Donnell (Principal), Denise O' Dowd (Deputy Principal)

Opening Remarks by Chairperson Clare McIntyre

- Welcomed all present especially the Principal, the Deputy Principal and parents of new students.
- Acknowledged role of members of the Parent's Association Executive who have resigned as their daughters have completed their studies in St. Raphaela's. These include: Former Chairperson PJ Dolan; Treasurer - Nuala Downes; Parents representatives - Miriam Flannery and Rory Burke. All have been stalwart supporters of the school and the Parents Association over many years and had made a major contribution to the executive committee, its fundraising initiatives and the school building programme over the past three years.
- Thanked the outgoing committee members who had worked so hard over the past year to achieve the most successful fundraising year ever for the school.
- Briefly summarised the role of the Parents Association working together with parents, guardians, Principal, staff and Board of Management for the good of the students and the school.
- The association is a voice for the parents and may on occasion influence school policy. The PA is most visible she said in its fundraising role achieving an €11.5k for a single event earlier this year – a record for the school. (This was the cookery demonstration by Neven Maguire held in February 2015).
- Reminded the gathering that events throughout the year are advertised on Facebook and encouraged all to sign up to Care Monkey the school messaging service.

The Minutes of 2014 were accepted as read and were approved. (This was proposed by Fergal O' Sullivan and seconded by Siobhan Gentleman).

Principal's Address

- Ms O Donnell acknowledged the work of the outgoing committee, and their involvement in many big and small occasions throughout the year and particularly the work of the current Chairperson who invests so much time and energy organizing events and doing much of the background work to ensure they run smoothly.

- The school's Golden Jubilee will take place on Saturday 17th October with Eileen Dunne (Supreme Court Council) as special guest.
- Considerable internal renovation took place in the school over the summer, improving available corridor space and creating quiet places to work and study and upgrading the flooring.
- Notification has just been received that funding is being made available for the building of an additional classroom. Likely to be the last extension to the school which has now reached its maximum student capacity and in any event there is little room for further expansion. Work will begin immediately as planning permission has already been secured.
- Office 365 is installed in the school and can be accessed on the students own devices – which should support home study and alleviate some of the pressure of carrying books to and from school.
- The student population has increased from 500 to 654 over the past five years and will stabilize at this level.
- In order to offer as wide a subject choice as possible, the school has in the past subsidised a range of additional subjects not funded by the department.
- Student guidance and counselling has also been resourced by the school as no funding for same has been received over the past five years.
- Emphasis is placed on seeing the school as a learning community and focusing on the concept of “Growth Mindset”. (A subtle but very effective approach which posits that our most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. It values effort and risk taking and the process of learning as a reward in itself. It fosters resilience and encourages students to reconsider what success and failure mean).
- **Among upcoming events planned by the school are:**
 - A get together of First Year parents to facilitate interaction as their daughters settle into new friendships in secondary school, with an input on Study Skills to help parents and students better manage the learning process. (This will take place on 4th November)
 - Meeting for Third Year parents to facilitate decision making around joining the Transition Year and/or subject choices for those proceeding directly to 5th Year.
 - Meeting for 6th Year parents to brief them on the CAO system. 9dates to be provided later)

Board of Management

There was no report as the Board has not yet met this academic year.

Treasurer Report

See attached

Constitution

A revised constitution was voted on and carried by a majority. Under guidelines of the NPC a regular review of the constitution is required.

Election to fill vacancies for Parent's Representatives to the board.

There were four candidates: Fergal O' Sullivan, Mark Pender, Jane Heaney & Christine Donegan
Mr O' Sullivan and Ms Donegan were elected.

Election of Parents Association representation for the 2015-2016 academic year.

Attached is a list of the newly elected Executive Committee representatives.

AOB

A range of issues were raised:

- Concern re the schools performance on the National Standards List which prompted considerable input from the floor with regard to:
 - Assessing how well the national results profile conforms to a schools overall achievement academically and how well the actual experience of a particular school is reflected in the statistics; proportion of students from the school moving into third level education; the emphasis on results which has led to students resorting to grinds in many subjects particularly among private schools; the need for the school to challenge itself and its overall performance but equally the need to celebrate those students who achieve their potential as well as celebrating high performers.
 - The challenges of transitioning from secondary school to college.
 - Concerns re heavy school bags and what can be done to better manage this situation which can potentially impact on students' health and makes walking to school difficult. (A recurring concern that seems not to have a satisfactory solution).
 - The pros and cons of a digital strategy in improving the 'heavy bag' situation and its potential on learning as a strategy in its own right. The Principal informed the meeting that following extensive research by the school in recent years it had been decided not to introduce iPads in the short term as this approach has not proved to be an unqualified success to date, primarily due to the impact of excessive screen use for the children and also the cost of the necessary equipment, its maintenance and insurance. Developments in this area will be monitored closely and reviewed over time.

Next Parent's Association meeting will take place on Tuesday 20th October.