



Spiritan Education Trust Office Report Board of Directors' Meeting January 2021

School Chaplaincy

Ronan has met with all school chaplains (lay and Spiritan) who continue to develop their work and ministry in the schools. The work of chaplaincy within all schools continues to respond to the Spiritan mission within the context that each school finds themselves.

As per agreement with the Spiritan Province the contract for the Spiritan Chaplain in Rockwell College was reviewed by SET as his contract was coming to an end. Fr. Tom Hogan's contract was renewed for a further two years.

Christmas Newsletter.

The Newsletter was issued just before the commencement of the holidays and was packed with a lot of reports/updates from all of our schools. There is a huge range of talent among both our student and staff bodies and schools welcomed the opportunity to showcase some of their activities through the newsletter. The response from across the broad Spiritan community was very positive.

Templeogue Chaplaincy

One of the areas of concern within the Chaplaincy programme is the lack of chaplaincy within Templeogue College. Fr. Paddy Moran continues to support the pastoral programme in Templeogue College within his busy schedule. However, there continues to be no lay chaplain, either at a part-time or full time level. Templeogue school is the only Spiritan school without a lay Chaplain team. As Templeogue College is the only non-fee charging Spiritan school within our network, it is proposed that we explore the development of Chaplaincy, including the training of a Chaplain and offer some subsidy towards the cost of Chaplaincy provision.

SET/Webinar for Middle Leaders (ML)

The proposed online ML programme will start in mid-January and continue over the three nights. This programme continues with the input and support of the Four Joint Trusts (Jesuit Trust, Le Cheile Trust and Loreto Trust and Spiritan Education Trust).

Towards a discussion on Confirmation Preparation.

The proposal below is an attempt by the Ethos committee to spark consideration of an alternative to the current Confirmation preparation which is currently conducted exclusively at Junior school level.

The family has an enormous role in nurturing and enriching the faith of their children as does the Church itself. Faith Development is an ongoing process for life and takes place within a context of culture. Archbishop Diarmuid Martin spoke of the faith crisis in Ireland saying,

'Irish culture had drifted from being a largely faith-based community into a heavily secularised one and that for many today, faith plays no role in their lives,'¹

While the Catholic school continues to be part of the Church's mission and offers support to the family for young people's faith journey, each school community has its own challenges regarding the development of students in a faith context. It is from this context that this proposal has its foundations.

The proposal is to pilot a programme of sacramental preparation for confirmation that would delay the administration of the sacrament at primary school and locate it within a secondary school context, in particular, Transition Year (TY). This proposal accepts that the current practice of confirming children at the age of twelve or thirteen years old is in need of revision. This proposal would also be optional for students and parents to discern.

Current Context within Spiritan School and Faith Formation

Currently within the Spiritan School network we have three primary schools (Non recognised primary schools) and seven secondary schools (A mix of fee-charging and state funded schools). Like all Catholic schools, faith development is an important element of our schools' ethos programme. We have had many different experiences of faith development for our students and their families.

In line with many strategic directions in this area, we as a Educational Trust body has encouraged and engagement with our schools (both primary and secondary) about developing support for faith development of students by encouraging family involvement.

It is our experience as it is the same for many others, that family supports are often absent for a variety of reasons when supporting young people through faith development. However, it is also recognised that parents remain strong advocates for their children to have the best experience within the school context. Parents within our school community as it is with many parents offer a strong support for their children throughout the secondary school experience.

It is within this context, young people may benefit from an experience of receiving the sacrament of confirmation at a later age. This experience may offer them an opportunity of engaging with the sacrament of maturity² at a stage in life more appropriate to a young adult decision. The proposed programme locates confirmation preparation within TY. Locating a confirmation preparation programme links well to the *modus operandi* of the TY programme. The TY programme in all schools offer a holistic mixture of formal and informal educational experiences. Confirmation as programme of formation for young people within a catholic secondary school would also give a renewed focus for the faith formation programme within a catholic secondary school.

¹ Brendan McConvery CSsR., 'True Extent of Faith Crisis: Reassess, Rethink, Renew', *Reality Informing, Inspiring, Challenging Today's Catholic*, 84, 4, May 2019, 1, 6, (p.6).

² CCC 1308

Currently with the Spiritan education experience a number of international boarding students have received their confirmation at a later time than the primary age. A programme of accompaniment is prepared and supported by the Chaplaincy team in the schools in order to have an age appropriate programme for these students. These students receive the sacrament as 15/16 year old students and present themselves for preparation and the reception of the sacrament. All are supported by their families and their fellow students. The work of the school chaplains and pastoral workers play an important role here.

Conclusion

The proposal for discussion is to locate a choice for students and parents regarding the preparation and reception of the sacrament of confirmation in the TY year of secondary school as a pilot programme. The aim of this proposal is explore the possible advantages and disadvantages to young people in regard to supporting and developing an appropriate faith formation programme that responses to the context of young people and the Church today. This proposal has been developed through a number of conversations but currently has no further plans attached to it.

Global Citizenship Education and Ethos Teachers' working committees.

Both teacher's groups meet again in January and early February. The GCE committee will focus on the upcoming online showcase. This is to happen on April 29th and 30th and will include some schools from overseas. The details of this showcase has yet to be clarified.

The Teachers' ethos committee will continue to look at the area of teacher engagement with ethos. Currently this group of teachers continue to input where they can around the area of teacher formation etc... Currently this group is involved in the planning of the February 2nd prayer service in conjunction with Spiritan Mission Ireland office.

Rockwell College.

In a letter dated the 18th of December the secretary of the BoM confirmed that the proposed on-campus girls boarding would not now proceed this year." *The Board has considered the SET request and will not proceed with the project for the 21-22 school year. News of the postponement will be communicated in the prioper manner to all relevant parties*" It may be necessary to confirm that this postponement is indefinite.

There have been a number of communications between Tom J. and the Rockwell Financial Controller. In this communication Tom J has emphasised the need for the 2021 budget to be presented to SET for approval. A request was received from the BoM to spend 15,000 on a basketball upgrade. Following discussion between Tom S. and Tom J. we advised the board that facilities have to be maintained and a once off cost of €15K is not material in the overall context of the Rockwell school expenditure and its noted that the project will proceed.

The Rockwell College 2020/21 budget is work in progress and Tom J has assured Rockwell that SET will assist in any way it can for the BOM to achieve a balanced budget.

Blackrock College.

Blackrock College has been approved to proceed with the pitch project previously agreed in principle. The finances are in order to support this development and the school has been written to to remind them that in line with the Spiritan charism every development project must be ethos proofed. In that context we reminded them that campus wide improvements present opportunities to increase local community access to our schools and facilities. We also informed them that we would further engage with them in the near future on this matter.

Special Education.

The letter below was issued to all Chairs of our school BoM's and is self explanatory.

January 2021

Exploring further potential of the Spiritan Educational Mission in Ireland

Dear

In recent times, the leadership of the Spiritan Congregation has sought a means to expand the vision of inclusivity within the educational mission and in line with the Spiritan charism.

In the spirit of that challenge, the Provincial Leadership Team, acting as Members of the Spiritan Education Trust (SET), has requested the Board of Directors of SET to explore the broadest expression of the Spiritan education mission in Ireland, guided and emboldened by the values we cherish and promote. Such expression would include, in particular, ways of responding to the ever-developing need for Special Education provision at first and second level.

In responding to the Congregation's request, the Board has directed the SET Executive to initiate dialogue over the coming months with a range of key stakeholders– including, most importantly, our Spiritan schools – with a view to developing tangible proposals for consideration by the Congregation.

We look forward very much to engaging in constructive dialogue with the schools in due course and in the meantime, we wish you continued success in your magnificent endeavours through the current health crisis and beyond.

We wish you a safe, healthy and fulfilled New Year.

In the Spirit

**Tom Sheridan
Executive Officer SET**

A number of meetings have take place with senior officials of the DES to explore what initiatives could be pursued by SET to address the very significant deficit that exists in terms of providing educational supports to students with special needs.

Bereavement.

The death has occurred in Glasgow of the Father of Mr. James Docherty, Principal of Willow Junior School, Blackrock. Mr Docherty Senior had been unwell for some years. We send our condolences and prayers to James and his family at this time. It is of some comfort that James was in Scotland visiting his Father and had the opportunity to spend some time with him.

Congratulations

The Deputy Principal of St. Mary's Junior School, Judith Keane welcomed her son into the world on Sunday the 27th of December. Jack, Michael, Thomas Reehill is healthy and well and will no doubt bring nothing but joy to Judith over the coming years. Our congratulations to both parents and the extended family.