



SET Board of Directors Meeting November 2nd, 2020 SET Executive Team Report

School Retreat Programme

The Retreat programme for 1st and 6th years has now been completed as planned. Ronan has also completed Confirmation workshops in Willow Park Junior School. Approximately 670 students have engaged with the SET retreat programme, so far this year. The programme continues to receive positive feedback from all schools.

SET's New Staff induction

The SET staff induction workshop took place on October 19th via Zoom. We had 45 new teachers in virtual attendance for the induction. This year's programme was reduced compared to other years due to the virtual nature of the meeting. Nevertheless, the programme was engaging and interactive. It provided a platform for new teachers to meet and learn about the Spiritan Ethos within our school network.

SET Teachers' Ethos Group

The teacher group on ethos have agreed to meet via zoom this week to offer support to each other as they move towards Christmas.

Franchise Proposal

A proposal has been received in relation to establishing a "Spiritan" school in China. This is a well-established practice in the Far East and is essentially a commercial proposal which allows a company to establish a private school with close links to a prestigious English-speaking school. Many public English schools have been franchised in this way in China.

See below the points made by the proposer.

- "In China, there is a vast market demand for such education from esteemed, English-speaking western schools.
- In essence, this is a form of franchise and, as such, the benefits for Blackrock College would be financial and other (see next section).
- It is important to note that this proposal also applies to other schools that the Spiritans manage if it is of interest to them.
- The above business aim is based on the positive, widely known, and respected name of Blackrock College both in Ireland and, to some degree, overseas.
- This reputation is appealing to parents of secondary school level boys who want an excellent education but also grounding in ethics and social consciousness."

- Importantly, among the demographic that this offering targets, there is open-mindedness - even desire for - a Catholic ethos, because such parents see this in cultural/educational terms as much as they do in religious terms.

School Chaplaincy support

Ronan has provided individual 1:1 support (zoom and in person) for all school lay chaplaincy personnel as they face various challenges in their school programmes.

ST. Mary's Junior School

The principal has informed us of her intention to retire at the end of the current academic year. The position will be advertised publicly and interviews will take place in the Spring of 2021. The D.P. will be on temporary leave from early December and interviews for her replacement will take place on Wed the 4th of November. Tom S. and Ronan will sit on the interview board.

Development Education/Global Citizenship education programme (GCE)

A meeting of DE Teachers took place on September 18th via zoom. This meeting followed individual meetings in each school to support the DE programme. The Agenda for the meeting was as follows:-

- Arrival and welcome. Prayer
- Feedback on the recent meetings in each of the schools
- Grounding the Dev Ed committee in our shared purpose and planning for the year ahead - are there any activities you would like to see included?
- Showcase/ Updates from each school/Close.

Duquesne Conference

At the request of the Duquesne organisers of the "Integrity of Creation" online 2020 conference, SET provided a digital opening prayer. Dr Gerry McGill sent a note of appreciation to Ronan for their help in this request.

Templeogue College

Interviews for a number of AP1 posts will take place on the 5th and 6th of November. Tom S. will sit on the interview board.

A firm of architects recently made a presentation of a campus masterplan to the Board of Management. Efforts are currently being made to engage the interest of the Department officials with a view to addressing the significant infrastructural deficiencies which exist on the Templeogue campus. The Assistant Secretary has agreed to meet with Tom S. in November to consider the possibility of a joint venture which could meet the needs of Templeogue College as well as those of the Department.

Finance & Company Secretarial Report

Prior to the commencement of the Schools annual audit there was a meeting between the SET Executive and the Auditors RBK.

The following matters were discussed...

- Concentration of going concern principle in Spiritan Schools, ensuring our schools can meet their financial commitments for the next twelve months.
- Agree report of KPI's for all schools to highlight performance and efficiencies within Spiritan schools.
- Rockwell College going concern, 5 year plan feasibility, marginal costing focus on fixed and variable costs and in particular Salaries & Wages costs highlighting productivity and efficiencies.
- RBK have concerns regarding St. Marys College and the lack of internal controls and the ability of the school's management to deliver reports and data in a timely manner.
- Focus on Templeogue College internal financial management reporting.
- A general discussion ensued regarding the appointment of RBK as Group Auditors, and the reasoning of SET to appoint an indigenous Irish accountancy practice with a dedicated Charity expertise. The statutory and compliance role of RBK was discussed along with the expectation of SET and the schools receiving added value in the form of relevant KPI reports at financial year ends.
- Compliance and Legal Matters were discussed over the following headings.

CRA Annual Return: "Junior Schools registration matters"

Company Constitution "Accounting and Legal Relationship" clarity required following recent communications.

Revenue, Charity registration and Junior Schools

Are SET Junior Schools separate entities requiring their own Revenue Charity Number?

FSSU reporting and combination of Senior and Junior Schools Balance Sheets

The above is not an exhaustive list of matters discussed with RBK but the matters most relevant at this time.

Other matters requiring mention to the SET board are as follows:-

- Risk Analysis Exercise, PTR, Junior Schools, utilising financial reserves, Maintaining Charity Status, Subsidiary/Control question, Company Law dilemma for Directors concerning Company Constitution and reserved powers for members.
- Annual Reporting through the lens of Ethos- how do you measure? Annual financial reporting should reflect on how well the company has performed concerning its objects and Education Mission not just from an Irish dimension but from an Ultimate Group Holding Company perspective.
- Updating and refreshing of Company Strategic plan, that the required checks and balances are installed to be able to demonstrate to third parties that the Company is adopting best practice concerning governance matters.
- Relook at Spiritan Schools reporting and introduce a cost- effective reporting structure which will facilitate oversight of our Schools by SET.

- RBK wish to present the Financial Statements to the SET board for approval. The presentation by RBK to the SET board would also provide the opportunity for the Group auditors to discuss the financial statements of the Spiritan schools and the relevant contents of the management letters to each BOM.
- RBK are anxious to do this as part of their audit function but have been unable to do so up to now due to time constraints and in particular the delay in getting information from St. Mary's College.

APTCS response to the proposed changes in the Section 29 appeals mechanism.

The Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed changes in the Section 29 Appeals procedures. The role of patron is even more embedded in the new Education (Admissions to Schools) Act (2018) as the patron has a legal responsibility to approve the Admissions Policy of schools (section 62). This approval process has made huge demands on patrons in terms of time, resources, personnel, legal advice etc. and has been carried out, of necessity, in a relatively short time period. This is especially so for patrons of a large number of schools, some numbering in the hundreds.

Since the patron now has a legal responsibility to approve the Admissions Policy and the policy itself may be interrogated during the Appeals process, APTCS asks if a patron can be brought as a party to the Appeal. Could an Appeal Board involve a patron (sections 6 & 8) regarding a query or issue in relation to the Admissions Policy? This would, consequently, have financial and resource implications for patrons. Will the Appeals process be a mechanism for interrogating the patron approval of a particular Admissions Policy?

In relation to section 2.2(b) on the Appeal procedures against refusal to admit due to the school being oversubscribed, APTCS would welcome clarity on “the grounds” that are allowed for the making of a request for a review by the Board of Management. These grounds could be interpreted in a very wide sense unless so clarified.

APTCS queries whether the new Appeals mechanism, for admission to schools for reasons other than being oversubscribed and for exclusions, is an appeal on whether or not the Board of Management has followed its own stated policies and whether fair procedures were followed rather than an appeal against the Admissions Policy per se. This is very relevant in the context of the school policy for Admissions having been approved by the patron at the outset.

Patrons would, likewise, have to be assured by the Boards of Management that the Admissions Policy and the Code of Behaviour of any individual school are aligned.

In the context of the actual appeal process, APTCS queries the provision of two other persons (section 6.2) being able to attend the hearing as well as the parents and BOM. These other persons could well be legal or other professionals. This would make the whole process far more legalistic and again involve greater costs for all parties involved.

APTCS stresses that members of Boards of Management, appointed by the patron, are volunteers, usually members of the local community and seeking to serve and “give something back”. They do not envisage being party to lengthy and costly legal processes having acted in good faith and according to policy and procedure. The cost in terms of finance and personal involvement may make it even more difficult to recruit Board members into the future.

October 2nd school 'Zoom' prayer

Over 250 screens (approx. 3500 viewers) were engaged across the schools on October 2 between 9am and 9.15. The response was excellent from the schools and very well received by everyone. The province was delighted by the school participation.

Spiritan Identity Work

The Spiritan Identity, Faith and Mission office will lead a workshop for Blackrock TY students on Spiritan leadership on November 11th. This will explore faith and justice and how it links to the work of SVP and their personal involvement with the charity this coming Christmas.

SET quarterly Newsletter

The Autumn Newsletter was issued just before the mid-term break. It was heartening to see the range of activities taking place in our schools and encouraging to receive a number of e mails from members of the congregation, including the Provincial thanking us for the Newsletter and congratulating the schools on their response to the many challenges which they currently face.

SET Research Proposal

The executive has agreed to explore a proposal for research (possible doctoral research) on seeking a pathway to support the integration of expressed values in the schools' operation. This research might offer SET an opportunity to develop conversations and create a process with 'stakeholders' on projects the BOD sees as priorities within the school network. This process is now with the ethos subcommittee.

Rockwell College

The Board of Rockwell has been written to about two issues:-

1. We have requested further details in relation to the proposed spend of €100,000 for an upgrade of the boys' boarding facility in the context of the agreed school administrative procedures for Capital Development projects. Tom J has continued to advise the EO and the executive team are currently awaiting an update from the school re the financial plan.
2. As decided at the Directors' meeting a letter was issued to the Board of Rockwell asking them in the light of the COVID crisis and other considerations to reconsider the intention to admit girl boarders from September 2021.

Training for the new Boards of Management

We have been informed by the AMCSS that the usual training provided for new Board of Management members will not take place but that plans are being prepared to provide an online presentation. We will need to put in place a plan to offer training to supplement what is on offer from the AMCSS. Our experience from the new teachers' induction conducted online will be helpful in this regard.