

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
WITH THE PRINCIPAL

scoil niamh parents association

NEWSLETTER

december 2015



INCLUDING...

Treasurer's Highlights
Coming soon
Winter clothes appeal
Award from Science
Celebrating Diwali
Celebrating Eid Mubarak
Cake Sale
Plus More...



A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL



I hope you enjoy this edition of our school's newsletter. We have had a fantastic first term so far. We are excited about the upcoming holidays as they always refresh us before another term of great work! Thanks to all the parents, staff and children for making our school community a happy and effective one. Everyone's contribution no matter how big or small makes a difference.

TREASURER'S HIGHLIGHTS



Anthony Dunne, our Treasurer maintains an account for the Parents Association (PA). Last year (01.11.2014-31.10.2015) was another great year for the PA in terms of fundraising. The PA raised in total €5,422 and donated €4,878 to the school, up 27% year on year.

We held eight separate events last year up 60% on last year.

Fund Raising Events	Amount
Sponsored Walk	€2,050
Table Quiz	€1,615
Bake Sales	€688
Shamrock	€445
Recycling	€315
Disco	€215
Non Uniform Day	€126
BBQ	(€32)

The Sponsored Walk, Table Quiz and Bake Sales make up 80% of the total funds raised.

We were also able to hold a free BBQ event last year that turned out to be a great day for all the kids and parents.

I would like to thank you all the parents for your generosity throughout the year and look forward to count next year's donations. We are setting ourselves a target of €7,000 to be raised this year and welcome your continued support.

COMING SOON...

We have lots more fun events in store for the remaining school year and hope as many people as possible can participate/attend...

Here are some of the events to look forward to: In February we will be holding our annual **VALENTINE'S DISCO** for the children after school. We will be selling our Shamrocks again for **SAINT PATRICK'S DAY!**

We are really looking forward to our 3rd Annual **TABLE QUIZ NIGHT!**

Get ready for a **SPRING CLEAN** out with another recycling event.

The **ANNUAL SCHOOL SPONSORED WALK** in May/June.

And after such a great success last year we are really looking forward to the **FAMILY BBQ** day towards the end of the school year!!!



TOPAZ WINTER CLOTHING APPEAL FOR SYRIA

In October our school participated in the Goal Winter Clothing Appeal for Syrian families affected by the on going war. We were asked to donate new items or items in excellent condition that included blankets, bedding, sleeping bags, towels, winter coats and warm clothing. Members of the parents committee took the donations to the Topaz garage in Citywest for collection by Goal, the organising charity. The staff member at the Topaz informed us that the Appeal had been very successful. We felt it was a very kind way of helping those who sadly find themselves in such terrible living circumstances through no fault of their own. Many thanks to everyone who participated for their very generous donations.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL

The Parents Association caught up with the principal of Scoil Niamh Mr. Séamus Conboy on the day of the Bake Sale and spent a little time in his company. And this was the interview.

The readers would like to know where it all started for you.

I was born in the village of Knock in the County of Mayo. Knock is very famous for the catholic people in Ireland.

There was an apparition event in 1879 and it was popular village to grow up.

My mum owned a shop in Knock and my father was a farmer. I have two older brothers and one younger sister. We were very close when we were growing up. I went to the local primary school and I went to secondary school in the next town. I spent my early years in the west of Ireland.

From a very young age I knew I was going to be a teacher. At play I was always the teacher and my younger sister and her friends were my students.

At the end of my secondary school years, I obtained the required grade to train as the teacher at St.Patrick's Teachers College in Drumcondra.

Even during my transition year in the secondary school all my placements for work experience were in primary schools. So I knew, that was the path I was going to take.

During your pupil and student years did any teacher inspire you to take the path you chose?

My primary teachers, especially in the village of Knock, were amazing, very passionate and dedicated.

A lot of people have this view of teaching being an easy job where you start at 9am and finish at 2pm and have the whole of summer as holidays.

I never had that perception of a teacher because these teachers

in my village went over and beyond all the time. We were involved in every drama, every music society, and every Irish language society. We were constantly on buses

"When we started we were only three members of staff."



travelling around with these societies.

I never had that view of teaching being an easy job. It is a difficult job but it was seen as a respectable job in the west of Ireland.

It was a culture shock when I came to Dublin and realized that teaching did not have the same status as it was in the west of Ireland. But the difference

is that in this school there seem to be a huge respect from the parents for the teachers and

academia.

In some of the schools that I worked in there was some difficulties in getting parents to work with the children. In this school the children hunger for knowledge and the parents are open to new things.

What do you think are your personal achievements as a principal so far?

I am really proud of everything that has happened in Scoil Niamh to date.

When we started off we were only three members of staff: Ms Orla Doherty, Mrs Karen Kelly and I in 2012. We were trying to get a quota of 20 students and it was very difficult.

I needed to sell a concept in 2012.

There was nothing – no school building, no school uniform, no school crest, and no school number.

I was going around to Citywest hotel and shopping centre trying to sell a concept. And I was so lucky that 20 families believed and trusted in me because really I was the only identity of

the school. These families took a leap of faith by signing up to join Scoil Niamh. In fact there were more established schools in the area which these families

could have sent their children to. And so far these families have expressed their satisfaction with Scoil Niamh.

Watching the school grow fills me with the pride.

I look forward to coming to work every day. The incredible staff and dedicated parents help to

"Without a doubt parents who are the primary educators of the children."

make what can be a very stressful job, very enjoyable. The teachers often go above and beyond which reminds me of my teachers at school in Knock.

The culture of Scoil Niamh makes the teachers want to achieve more for the pupils. The current teachers have an intrinsic motivation to be the best and watching the newly qualified teachers coming to join the school grow in their roles is phenomenal.

What are your thoughts about the current educational system and the role of the State, for example, regarding funding for primary education?

We are underfunded by the State, especially in this building where we are allocating a significant amount on our overhead rates. The school building was initially earmarked to be a shopping centre for the Citywest residential area. Even though it is a lovely building, it is expensive to run and we are constantly asking for funds to run it. Therefore we also rely on the Parents Association to help raise funds for extra things.

I like the position of our school because in the Irish Educational system we are a ultidenominational school. About 96% of the primary schools in Ireland are single denominational which I think is not reflective of the current population in Ireland. This does not give a reflection of diversity and inclusion and this need to be addressed by establishing more schools like Scoil Niamh to cater for the diverse populace.

Who do you think are the most important contributors in the

educational process?

Without a doubt – parents who are the primary educators of the children. But parents often hand over their role to the teachers. With regards to beliefs, the parents are aware that school cannot provide for the children but the school can provide a platform through the programme “Goodness me, Goodness you”. The onus is on the parents to provide the children with their beliefs.

“Compromise is important without giving entirely up your cultural values.”

In terms of academia, we are currently providing the Google Classroom facility in the 1st and the 2nd class where parents, teachers and children are constantly interacting. I think that this dialogue is rich and



powerful as compared to other schools where there is no such facility.

This interaction between the home and the school is so enriching for the children. It creates a community where parents are more involved in the education of the children.

Last June a survey was conducted by the school and the results reflected that the parents recognized the hard work that is put in educating their children.

Is there any place for idealism in the current educational system?

Absolutely, yes! Every school has a mission statement and a

vision. Every school will claim to be inclusive and treat everybody with respect and equally. And that is lovely on paper, but making this a reality is very difficult.

When you look at the foyer in the school we have two very distinct walls. We have got the multi-beliefs wall which identifies the various cultures and beliefs of our pupils, and we have the other wall which reflects equality. The wall on equality shows the Irish legislation. As a State school, we look to things like this to inform our values and how one cannot discriminate against people in nine categories.

I think the only way we can all live in harmony is to bring those two walls together.

What is most challenging in my position is that the parents from different cultures view the various aspects on the wall of equality from different perspectives.

People have very different interpretation of equality.

The main aim is to try to get everyone to compromise a little. In order to live together harmoniously, compromise is important without giving up entirely their cultural values.

It is important for the

children to be educated in an environment where they are informed of the various religions, about gender equality and about the different cultures. Without this it will be difficult for them to live in a harmonious community.

That is why we place importance on idealism for the school.

We want to show the people the value in diversity

during school hours and after school as well. We live in that diversity outside of school hours and we want to reflect it also in school and to teach children how to cope with that.

During my school years in Knock the pupils in the school were all

Irish, white and catholic. When I came to Dublin, it was a huge shock to see people who were not like me. But these days the diversity is prominent nationwide. Our children will see this diversity as a rich tapestry that makes up life. We are hugely idealistic around that.

Has the teacher got a role in the career choices of the pupils?

I do believe that the teacher has a role in the career choices of the pupils. I remember the huge influence my teachers had on my choice of career. My teachers did not tell me to be a teacher but I always wanted to be one of them. I suppose different teachers have different passions and talents. The pupils will have the opportunity of being taught by eight different teachers over the years in the school. And these teachers might inspire the next scientists, doctors, engineers and various professions. Even when the children have left the school, they will always recollect what they learnt or what inspired them in their future decisions. Therefore I think that the teacher has a huge influence in career choice and this makes it an enormous responsibility on the part of the teacher. I have very good memories of school but the one that stands out was a negative experience. In 5th class I was telling my teacher about my brother's birthday and the teacher shouted at me to sit down and shut up. I have never forgotten this incident. I was in her classroom for two years but this is the only memory I have of those years. So we have to be very careful when it comes to teaching our children in school and to try to

remain positive for the children so that they have good memories of their time in our school. The children place a lot of importance to the words of their teachers and quite often make references to it. Thus the role of the teacher is of enormous responsibility and significant.

"Want to show the value in diversity during school and after school hours."

In a utopian society what would be the ideal pupil for you?

To me, the ideal pupil, has nothing to do with academia or with talent, it is the person who is strong enough inside. They are able to include everybody. That to me is the

tonight I am taking some holidays to be with my family. During this time I try to switch off from my professional life. My family and my friends are exceptionally important to me. I will be meeting my parents, my siblings, cousins and friends.

My identity as a principal is of equal importance to me. I feel it is a huge responsibility and it is a role I do not take lightly. I am proud to be a principal and I feel I am giving the school a good service. I also feel when the curtain comes down on my role as a principal; I will know it is time to hand over the baton to someone else.

What do you wish for your readers?

I wish for the readers to continue to develop their relationship with the school and with the teachers.

I acknowledge that some people come over to this country and they see a barrier between the school and the home. I hope those barriers break down. It is difficult for people with different languages

but our teachers will take their time and patience to build those relationships.

I think what is most important, is building a community within

the school and we need to work on this a lot more. I would like more events organized by the school to get more parents involved. I believe such events will bring a lot of people together and galvanize social

networking amongst the parents. I would like to see all our parents and teachers interacting and working together to form one community.

"Continue to develop their relationship with the school and the teachers."

What do you think gives meaning to your life?

I see myself as a professional who has a personal life as well. Within both roles I feel secure and strong. My personal life is very important to me and I like to take the time, for example,





AWARD FROM SCIENCE FOUNDATION IN IRELAND

In June 2015 the Science Foundation of Ireland (SFI) awarded our school a Discover Primary Science Plaque of Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths because our teachers are using the innovative child-centred teaching approaches in science, technology and mathematics. On 8th of October teacher Mr. Kinsella erected the plaque from the SFI in our school foyer. A number of the funds that the Parents Association raised last year have been used to purchase some science equipment for the school. This science equipment will enable our children to receive a better education in science, technology and mathematics.

DIWALI

DIWALI is a five day festival in India. Indians celebrate Diwali with a family gathering, glittering clay lamps, fireworks, bonfires, flowers and sharing sweets. The first day celebration of Diwali is called Dhanteras. This year it starts on 9th of November until 13TH of November and the main day of the celebrations is 11th of November. In this festival Lord Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, is worshipped. It is believed that the Goddess wanders the Earth looking for homes where she will be welcomed. Hence, people open their windows and doors and lights up the lamps to invite the Goddess.



Diwali is celebrated based on different stories:

- In the North they celebrate it to mark the victory of King Rama by defeating the demon called Ramana.
- South India celebrates it as

the day that Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura.

In all interpretations the festival marks the victory of GOOD OVER EVIL.

Diwali decorations:

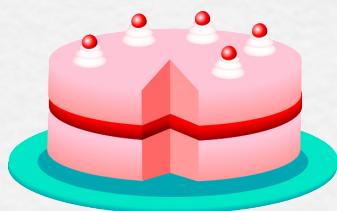
- Starts by making flower garlands to Goddess Lakshmi and decorating her.
- Designing the courtyard with colourful Rangoli and placing the lit clay lamps on them.
- Hanging lanterns outside the house.

Diwali sweets:

Coconut sweets and dry fruits are the favourites of Diwali.

EID MUBARAK

We celebrated Eid in ScoilNiamh on 25th September with a coffee morning where parents from the school of all religions and non came to celebrate and learn about the meaning of EID. Below you will see a little detail about the celebration of EID. There are two official holidays in Islam. Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al Adha. Eid Al Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadam (a month of fasting) and lasts for three days, Eid Al-Fidr festival of breaking of the fast and muslims usually give Zakat (charity) on the occasion. Eid Al-Adha is celebrated on the tenth day of Dhual-Hijjah and lasts for four days during which muslims usually sacrifice a sheep and distribute its meat among family, friends and the poor. In the Eid, Men, Women and children are expected to dress in their finest clothing to perform Eid prayer. After the prayer, they prepare sumptuous meals and sweets for family and friends. Before the special meal is served young children will line up in front of each adult family member and pass out the gift to the children.



PARENTS ASSOCIATION CAKE SALE

We had a great day at our cake sale on 23rd October 2015 which was a great success. We raised €687 for the school which will go towards educational supplies to benefit our children. We would like to thank all the parents who baked or brought stuff for us to sell and all those who showed up to support the school and buy some of the delicious cakes!! Also thanks to all the volunteers who helped us out on the day with the selling of the cakes!!

Congratulations to Audrey Kelly who is mum of Jack in senior infants who won the fantastic minion cake.

DESIGN A CARD PROJECT

In October the Parents Committee launched a new fund raising idea that we hope will become part of our annual fund raising year. Many schools in Ireland participate in a yearly fundraising Christmas Card project. As Scoil Niamh is a multi-denominational school that caters for children of all faiths and non, we were lucky to find an Irish company called 'Design a Card' that would suit the needs of our school.

The children designed some really lovely artwork! The majority of cards were designed with Christmas drawings and greetings but Birthdays, Thank yous, Easter, Holy Communion, Halloween, Happy New Year and Abstract art was also represented. A personal favourite was a Christmas Minion designed by Leona O'Loughlin from Room 9.

We were delighted with the response. Out of 217 children, 133 orders were placed raising a total of €588.70 for our school. It is very special for family and friends to receive a personally designed card, especially for those of us who have family abroad. Thank you to everyone who supported our school in this way.



SET-DOWN SERVICE RESULTS

In order to review with the possibility to improve the set-down service, the Parents Association Committee carried out the survey about how many parents use the set-down service and how many would like this service to continue.

- From 180 families in our school, 110 families took part in this survey (61%).
- From 110 families, 82 families drive to school using a vehicle.

- 31 families from the 82 use the set-down service on a regular basis.
- Another 31 families use the set-down service on occasions.
- 34 families are willing to volunteer for the set-down service.
- Rainy days are the most popular for using the set-down service.
- 75 families from the 110 think that it is extremely important to try to continue the set-down service.

The survey has allowed the Parents Association Committee to obtain some valuable information: parents' responsiveness to the survey was good; four (4) parent-volunteers are the minimum required for the set-down service; on rainy days extra help from the parents is a requisite and to increase the safety and attractiveness of travelling to the school, it is important that the guidelines of the set-down service was designed.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the Parents Association was held in the school on Thursday 26th November last. We would very much like to thank those parents who came along. Despite an invitation being sent out to all parents, we were, however, very disappointed with the overall attendance on the night. It was in fact a fantastic evening! We had an excellent presentation which went through all the activities we have organised throughout the year and what our plans are for

the year ahead. We also had an open forum where we got some great new suggestions for events

and activities. The PA Committee for the year 2015/2016 was also elected. We had a guest speaker on the night, a solicitor, who

spoke to us about the importance of making a will. Everyone found his presentation very interesting

and certainly food for thought.

Mr. Conboy spoke to us about the future of our school and the serious need for a post primary school in the area. We, as parents, can help bring this about by putting pressure on our TD's etc.

It also gave us great pleasure to present the school with a cheque for €4,878. The proceeds of our fundraising this year and what an achievement!

The presentation from the evening will be available to view on the school website in the Parents Section.



Recycling Event

A huge thank-you to everyone who brought in their old clothes, shoes and textiles for recycling last October. The event was a great success! Not only did we raise €315 for our school but this also meant a 10% donation to the Laura Lynne Foundation. A special thank-you to Audrey Kelly for the donation of the old phones as they made up a big part of the overall total raised. We plan to run another event sometime early in Spring so watch your emails for further information and hang onto any of your old stuff for our next collection!


News about the School building

At the Annual General Meeting of the Parents Association the school principal Mr. Conboy informed the parents at this meeting that the Department of Education has made promises concerning plans for the new school building but have not made it official. The proposed site for the new school building is close to our current site. The Department of Education is hoping to apply for the planning permission by February 2016 and hope that work will begin by October 2016. The plan is to have this new premises fully operating by September 2017.

Parents Business Directory

Do you have a business that you would like to include in Parents Business Directory? If so, contact scoilniamhpa@gmail.com.

KB Painting and Decorating Services


kbpaintingdecoratingservice@gmail.com
or  Facebook

Electrician

Eddie Harman
087 9367342



Pilates Mat Classes in Rathcoole

All levels and abilities welcome.
087 7938948 | tlaiseca@gmail.com
 Like Core & Co Pilates

Parents Association Members and Contact details



From L to R: Mara Prah, Nicola Fitzpatrick, Treasurer Anthony Dunne, Paula Moyles, Melissa Harman, Adele Curran and Clare Cuffe.
Gillian Doyle, Eliza Jane Branning, Chairperson Allison Carter, Secretary Alison Bannister and Joanna Hyland.

LIKE TO HELP OUT?

We would love for you to join us! There are many opportunities to help out without committing to joining the Parents Association Committee.

 www.facebook.com/scoilniamhparentsassociation

 scoilniamhpa@gmail.com