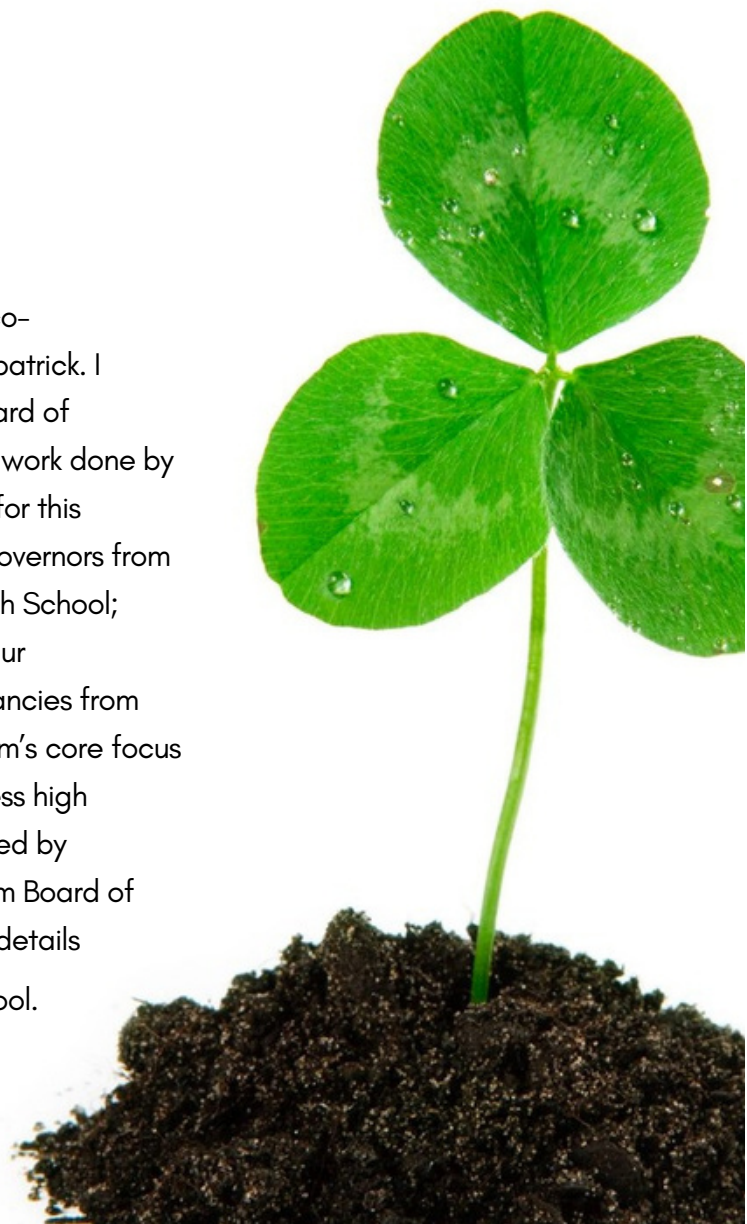


NEW LASALLIAN CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR SCHOOL DOWNPATRICK

*June 2023
Communique from
Interim Board of Governors*

Fresh start ...

On 1st September 2024, a new Lasallian, Catholic, 11-19, co-educational, voluntary grammar school will open in Downpatrick. I am delighted, as the Independent Chair of the Interim Board of Governors, to send you this communiqué summarising the work done by the Interim Board, over the last six months, in preparation for this exciting development. The Interim Board consists of five governors from St Mary's High School; five governors from De La Salle High School; three governors from St Patrick's Grammar School; and four independent governors. We are hoping to fill the two vacancies from St Patrick's Grammar School as soon as possible. The team's core focus is the creation of the new school in which pupils can access high quality education in a faith-based community characterised by inclusivity, diversity and educational excellence. The Interim Board of Governors has formulated an Implementation Plan which details the actions required for the establishment of the new school. Outlined below are the major achievements of our work over the last six months.



1. The Naming Process

One of the most rewarding milestones on our journey to date has been the naming process for the new school. The Ethos, Communication and Policy Committee organised an engaging, forward-thinking, positive naming process in which a representative group of pupils, parents and staff from each school was invited to produce a short video outlining their proposals regarding the name of the new school. Ideas regarding crest, motto and uniform were also noted as part of the process. The committee then produced, for the Interim Board, a short video presentation containing the key proposals. Pupil voice was the key factor in agreeing the submission of the new name forwarded to the Trustees for their approval.

I am delighted to share with you, that on 14th June 2023, we received correspondence from the Trustees confirming that the name of the new school is:

Lecale Trinity Grammar

The pupils' creativity, commitment and strong sense of place and local context were inspirational in their choice of name encompassing both the geographical location of the new school and the symbolism of the Trinity in terms of the three schools and strong connection of the town with St Patrick. In the Autumn term the pupils' ideas regarding crest, motto and uniform will be actively developed and, as before, pupil voice will be crucial in the decision-making process.

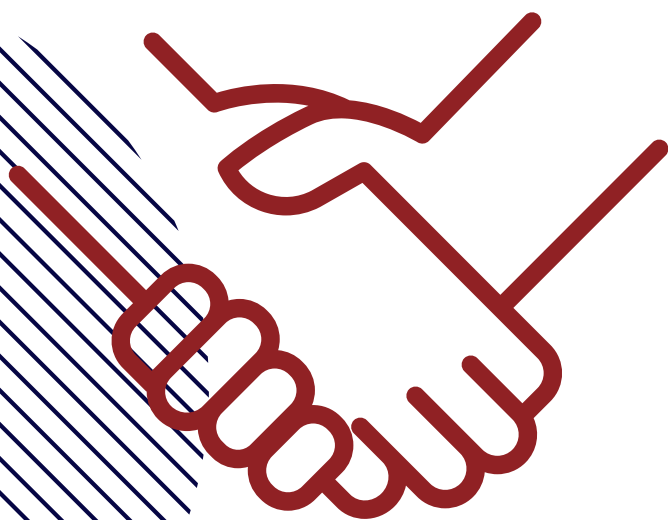


2. Values

The first step on our journey, in January 2023, was to create a new school anchored in the core values of Catholic social teaching, and the charism of the Lasallian Congregation and the Sisters of Mercy. The high degree of alignment between the three components resulted in agreement regarding our seven core values:

- ***Faith in the presence of God;***
- ***Social and ecological justice;***
- ***The Common Good;***
- ***Inclusivity;***
- ***Excellence for all;***
- ***Service;***
- ***Respect.***

It was agreed that these core values will not only be the bedrock of the new school but also the guiding light in our deliberations and behaviours as an Interim Board of Governors.



3. Vision

The next step in the process was to articulate how the core values found expression in the vision for the new school.

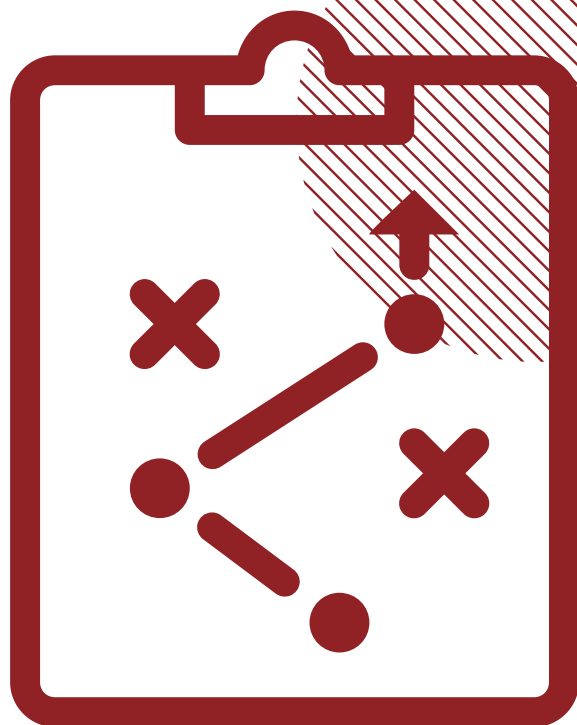
Our vision is to create a new school in which all pupils achieve their full potential by:

- **Being valued** in a faith-based school with a community ethos of inclusion, diversity and educational excellence;
- Being surrounded by love in a **welcoming, nurturing pastoral care system**;
- Enjoying **high quality, personalised learning experiences**;
- Having access to **broad range of academic and vocational courses**;
- Experiencing **quality careers advice** which will empower them to contribute to the local, regional and national economy;
- Experiencing **excellent special needs provision**;
- Enjoying enriched **extra-curricular opportunities**;
- Learning with a **broader range of friendship groups and other interest groups** (primary school friends, peers from sports teams and other interest groups); and
- Being **educated with their siblings**.



4. Strategy

In March 2023, the Interim Board of Governors spent a morning participating in a workshop on effective teamwork. The importance of collaboration, supportive relationships, service, trust, integrity and leadership was the recurring theme. In the afternoon and over the next few weeks, the four committees spent considerable time on their strategic intent, strategic aims and action plans. The strategic intent of each committee is as follows:



The Staffing Committee

The strategic intent is to ensure a dynamic, distributed leadership structure grounded in both a fusion of the skills, experience and expertise of the three staffing bodies and best practice at systems level.

The Education Committee

The strategic intent is to secure the highest quality educational experience for all pupils by providing a wide and diverse curriculum experience supported by the highest standards of pastoral care, learning, teaching and assessment to allow every pupil to achieve their potential.

The Finance Committee

The strategic intent is to manage the finances of the new school, upholding the principles of transparency, integrity and probity, in order to ensure that all resources are used effectively, allowing every pupil to succeed.

The Ethos, Communication and Policy Committee

The strategic intent is to engage in whole school, shared visioning on the ethos and values of the new school and ensure that all policies and capacity building initiatives are rooted in the shared ethos.

Each committee meets at least monthly to address their aims and action steps.

5. Meetings with Key Stakeholders

5.1 Pupils

In March, Mr Joe Gilson, Director of Mission for the De La Salle Congregation spent time in each of the schools talking with groups of pupils in a spirit of trust and mutual respect. While he sensed expected anxieties about the unknowns, he also found the pupils to be open to new opportunities. All three student bodies highlighted sports as an important dimension of their school identity and experience.

5.2 The Trade Unions

In April, the Chair and an Independent Associate met with representatives of the teaching and support staff trade unions in the three schools to explore key issues pertaining to their members in an amalgamation. Two Education Authority members of staff also attended the meeting.

5.3 Staff in the Three Schools

In May, the Chair and an Independent Associate met with teaching and support staff in the three schools over three consecutive days. Having shared the vision and details of the Reorganisation Agreement TNC 2013/2, they responded to questions on a variety of issues. There was a high degree of overlap in the issues emerging in all three schools. Representatives from the Education Authority also met with support staff in two of the schools.

5.4 Primary Principals

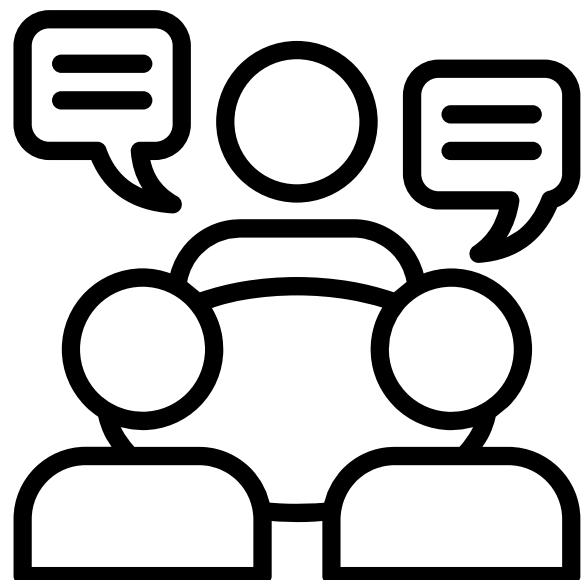
In June, the Chair and a Senior Education Officer from CCMS met with Category A and Category B principals to share the vision and to get their feedback on the Admissions Policy and criteria. The discussions were very informative and productive in helping the Interim Board of Governors reach a decision regarding an amendment to the admissions process, as originally outlined in the Case for Change.

5.5 Post Primary Principals

The Chairs of all four committees have engaged in several meetings with the current principals of the three schools on a variety of issues pertaining to staffing, curriculum, accommodation, finance and the naming of the new school. All these meetings have been held in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation. The Bursars in two of the schools have also met with the Finance Committee.

5.6 Parent Representatives

Before the end of June, the Chair and Vice Chair are having preliminary meetings with parent representatives from each of the three schools to explore their concerns and consider the creation of one parent group representing all three schools.



6. Admissions

A sub-committee of the Interim Board of Governors has been working on the Admissions Procedure. Trustees had requested an examination of the model proposed in the Case for Change to see if any adaptations could be made to address concerns raised by parents with children in Category B schools.

An initial modeling exercise resulted in a new option as follows:



Allocate 180 places to pupils in Category A schools (non-selective route) and 70 places to the pupils in Category B schools (selective route)

Meetings were held with the three post-primary principals and primary principals of both Category A and B schools to hear their feedback and consider the optimum solution. At their last meeting before the Summer break, the Interim Board of Governors approved the new option outlined above. The sub-committee is working on detailed admissions criteria which will be made available early in the Autumn term. The Interim Board of Governors would like to express their appreciation to the principals for their constructive, informative feedback which informed the decision-making process. It is planned to have a programme of meetings with our primary partners during 2023-2024.

7. Other Developments

There were other significant achievements during the last six months. They include an agreed Memorandum of Understanding on Staff Appointments in 2023-2024 in the three schools. The Interim Board of Governors appreciates the way in which all stakeholders adhered to the spirit of this agreement in reaching staff-related decisions. Other developments include:

- An agreed **Conflict of Interest Statement** for all recruitment panels in 2023-2024;
- A **Communications Policy** was produced by the Ethos, Communication and Policy Committee;
- The Education Committee **reviewed curriculum and assessment models** in the three schools and the potential to converge courses in this transition year;
- The Staffing Committee initiated **work analysing the current leadership structures** in the three schools and researching good practice in similar schools; and
- The Finance Committee has had several important **meetings on the PPP contract.**

8.Appointment of Principal Designate

This post has been advertised and closes this week. A recruitment panel of seven governors and two independent assessors is scheduled to shortlist on 4th July and interview for the post on 11th August 2023. A challenging Job Description has been constructed and a rigorous application and interview process is being followed.



9.Concluding Remarks

I trust that you have found this communiqué to be informative. The Interim Board of Governors recognises your desire to get answers to key questions and is determined to communicate frequently with you during 2023-2024. The Principal Designate will be working tirelessly with the Interim Board, staff and pupils in the three schools to ensure that the policies, procedures and staff development initiatives are all grounded in both best practice and our core values. Undoubtedly, the most important dimension of our shared endeavours will be providing rich opportunities for the pupils to engage in activities which will facilitate a smooth transition in September 2024.

I conclude by reiterating that we have a unique opportunity to come together and be part of something truly life-changing for all young people in the local community. At the heart of all our hard work is a determination to improve the life chances of all young people who will be cared for and educated in Lecale Trinity Grammar. I wish you, on behalf of all the governors, a restful, enjoyable Summer break and look forward to communicating with you again in September 2023.

Carmel McCartan

(Independent Chair of the Interim Board of Governors)

***Thank
You***

