**Principals Report to the Board of Management**

**Academic Year 2018 - 2019**

**ERSS Carrick-on-Suir**

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**Introduction**

This report has been prepared to comply with section 20 of the Education Act, 1998. It covers the school academic year of 2018 - 2019. It was presented at the Board of Management meeting on 19 May 2019.

The next report will issue in summer 2020.

**Total enrolment**

284 students were enrolled in the school in 2018/2019. During the year we lost a second year student to Comeragh College and gained a transition year student from Newtown School. In the previous year we enrolled 26 students. As a result of the tremendous efforts of staff we expect to enrol 55 first year students, three Transition Year students and have two students return into sixth year who were unable to participate fully due to health issues in August 2019. We also have an application for a student to start in second year next year. Therefore we should have 297 students on our roll next year.

**Ethos and links with ERST**

A variety of services and liturgies took place during the year. The Start-of-Year Mass, Graduation Mass for 6th year students and Masses for departed members of family of the school community were organised. It was a pleasant experience to have a school choir at some of these masses. Students continued to help in the daily parish masses by reading at mass.

All the major Catholic occasions were marked with differing events and awareness raising exercises. November was marked as a month of remembrance, Advent was celebrated as was Lent and Grandparents day. Ashes were distributed by Fr. O’Brien (who was appointed Chaplain in February in Place of Fr. Selma who returned to India) on Ash Wednesday.

Retreats were organised for some of the classes. These were well received by the participating students and staff.

We were fortunate this year to have a middle management position allocated to Ethos. With this position excellent work was done in the area. Firstly the school set up a committee for social justice which worked hand in hand with young SVP which was also set up in the school for the first time. Both these committees worked hand in hand with each other and had many common members.

Their work included work in terms of fund raising and visitation as charitable acts. There was also a strong emphasis placed on Advocacy. We are currently engaged in a pilot programme with other Blessed Edmund Rice schools aimed at working on issues such as the environment and the right for all to education around the world. We may consider getting involved in the ERST emersion programme in the near future.

We have rebranded the school in lines with the hopes of the Trustees. We have renamed the school, updated and made our school website a viable and dynamic resource, we have introduced new letter heads and crests and plan to have incoming first years uniform carrying the new crest.

Mr. Eddie Bourke, from ERST was invited as the guest of honour to our awards night where he also presented the Edmund Rice awards to qualifying students. He plans to visit the school early next year to do a staff afternoon on what it means to be an Edmund Rice School.

Two of our 5th years supported pilgrims on the Waterford and Lismore Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes this year.

The school’s Religious Education department was greatly assisted by our chaplains, the Diocesan Advisor (who visited the school in November) and the local priests.

Our links to ERST head office have in the main been very positive. We would benefit from more support in terms of our attempts to develop the school in terms of capital expenditure.

In my first year as Principal I would like to acknowledge the role of the JMB in my coping with the demands/understanding of the role and for all the advice they have imparted in this direction.

This week we received a communication from ERST asking that we support them in their establishment of the Edmund Rice school brand. We have already taken on board their wishes. We needed to add an Edmund Rice award to our school awards.

**Charity and Social Awareness**

Students and staff raised over €5,000 for the following charities:

* St. Vincent De Paul Christmas Appeal, where the students were complimented on having the biggest contribution from a school in the Carrick area ever.
* Help Noah to Walk Foundation, which raised nearly €1,500 to assist Noah’s family raise the necessary funds for an enabling operation.
* Pieta House was the benefit of numerous contributions from members of the school community.
* There was a large involvement in the “Darkness into Light” initiative.
* There were many cake sales, raffles, walks, fasts etc. that resulted in the meals on wheels, the local hospital etc. benefitting local initiatives.

The parents council raised circa €1,300 in their annual funding raising event which they have promised to contribute to the school by providing a class library and committing to assisting a student in the direct provision centre financially during the coming year.

Our work in social awareness has been mentioned in the above section. Along with the above mentioned we have also been active in environmental change initiatives, There is an active Green Schools committee, we have placed a restriction on bringing disposable plastic bottles to school (and have prototyped our own school bottle), got involved in Earth day by running a poster/poem/short story competition among other things.

**Academic**

Excellent results were achieved by the students taking the Leaving Certificate. Very impressive results were also achieved by the school’s Junior Certificate students in 2018. Over 60% of our 2016/17 cohort transferred to 3rd level education with the majority of the remainder of students taking up employment or training in the trade areas.

A detailed subject-by-subject analysis completed by subject planning convenors reveals that the levels of attainment by ERSS students in state examinations in 2018 were, once again, considerably above the national average. This analysis is shared with the school’s subject departments, BOM and Parents’ Council. The school rejoices in the academic success of all students.

The BOM congratulates all students and their teachers on the continued excellence of results in the school while encouraging all to focus on the potential for continued improvement.

Supervised Study was organised throughout the year and was availed of by an average of 40 students each evening. Supervised study for Leaving Certificate students was availed of by over 30 students on the Saturdays leading up to the state examinations and over the Easter break.

A pilot Homework Club was launched in November 2018 and proved successful. This targets students in need of assistance with homework. It was rolled out and supervised by one of our substitute teachers.

We had a subject inspection in March 2017. This was a positive experience for the Science department. The BOM is particularly keen to thank the teachers for their considerable work and enthusiasm in supporting exchanges with the inspectorate.

We were able to avail of the services of a French language support assistant form Scoil Mhuire during the year. We have been notified that we will be allocated our own teaching assistant for the coming year. We also hope to have three students join us from Spain to participate in our Transition Year Programme. This development should bring great benefits to the school and our students.

Of some concern is the number of students taking higher level Irish in the Leaving Certificate. Efforts are currently being made to address this concern through discussions with the teachers in the Irish department.

There are some concerns about how the LCVP programme is timetabled in the current year. We plan to make it compulsory for the upcoming academic year.

**Staffing**

The school’s total teacher allocation from the DES for 2017/2018 was 21.4. Of this total, 3.12 was set aside for students with special educational needs under the overall co-ordination of the school’s SEN coordinator. We have 0.5 allocation for Deputy Principal duties and a further 0.5 allocation for Career Guidance and 0.14 allocation for programme coordinator. We have been allocated 22.5 teachers for next year at the current time. With increased enrolment we would hope to get another 0.5 in July/August.

**Middle Management**

With the removal of the embargo on the appointment of teachers to middle management positions the process of appointment and accountability has changed. As a result of our current numbers we have three AP 1 and 5 AP 2 positions along with a Temporary AP 2 position.

During the current we entered to appointment process to fill the Temporary AP 2 position and an acting AP 2 position.

Here follows the report from those appointed to the middle management team. This report is based on the appointee submitting a report and being interviewed by the senior management team.

The general feeling from the post holders is that they enjoyed the challenge of their respective posts. Most believed they learned during the year. Most felt supported by their colleagues. There were some areas of general concern. Those who act as year heads felt that there wasn’t a consistent approach from teachers in the application of the schools code of behaviour.

All individual reports are available in the office.

I would like to take this chance to recognise the contribution of teachers to the leadership/management of the school in roles not appointed to the assistant principals. These roles include Greenschools, Student Support, End of Year Organisation, School Website, Amber Flag Initiative, Student Mentoring, First Year Transition, Student Council to mention but a few.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Maura and Jenny in the administration section of the school.

**Digital Learning and Information Technology (I.T.)**

Vsware was introduced in September primarily to monitor daily attendance and punctuality of all students. Daily text alerts were sent to the parents of students who were recorded as being absent during first class in the morning. Additionally, text alerts were sent to notify parents of certain school events, e.g. dates of parent meetings, students leaving state examinations early.

As the year progressed school reports were recorded using this system. This allowed for us to send out typed reports that appear very professional. It also enabled teachers to upload their results without necessitating them being in school. We intend to give parents/guardians access to the system next year. This will enable them to monitor their son’s progress and will enable them access to all records pertaining to them.

Vsware also provides us with a platform to make our returns to Tusla for student attendance.

Vsware is a very powerful tool and the more we use it the more we learn about it. This year’s subject options have been allocated using the system. It will also be used to prepare next years’ time table.

There has been a massive upgrade in the school website. It is now a dynamic tool that is continually updated. It has current news, policies, blogs, twitter and Facebook links among other things. The newest addition to our digital plan is the provision of an online payment system. We hope to have the vast majority of payments to the school processed through this system from now on. Linked to this we have set up an on line banking system to process payments from the school.

As a requirement for the allocation of funding we are required to develop a Digital Learning Strategy. This strategy was developed by a working group and submitted to the DES. It included some of the elements discussed above. It also included a working model for the appropriate operation of the computer room. There is now a protocol in place for working with students in the computer room. We have also tried to incorporate the use of ICT in learning and teaching. There have been short presentations on how some apps may be used in the classroom.

We have also introduced a domain based email system. All teachers now have their own work email address. This enables work related communications be dispersed easily without any onus on teachers to open the communications in their own time. The system used is Microsoft 365. We envisage putting all the school policies, the school plan, subject planning etc on the platform.

**Capital Development**

The present Board are keen to move forward with some capital projects in the school. Although we have been working on them for the year to date there appears to be no progress made. We had a visit from Noel Merrick (JMB and ERST) seeking advice on the following:

* The development of an all-weather sports facility. Previous BIOM’s have led fundraising for this. We have circa €100,000 put aside for the project but seem to be stalled by the trustees.
* The joint development of a sports hall with Scoil Mhuire. There needs to be work done at trustee level before the Boards of both schools commit to this development. We have willing and able people on staff and at Board level committed to driving this project forward.
* Emergency Works. WE are a situation where we have no female student toilets and no universal assess toilets. This is totally unacceptable in this day and age. We are in the process of pursuing this matter with the school architect and the trustees.
* Recently the DES announced the most recent Sumer Works scheme. We are in discussion with the architect in relation to what is the best way to proceed. The discussion has been based on the redevelopment of the old store building and the current heating/energy requirements of the school. Mr. Merrick has pointed out our need for a DCG room and an Art room. It has become apparent to me over the year that we also require a meeting room, (We had no suitable room for the examination orals and classes needed to be displaced) and more space for lockers.

We will continue to work on these projects for the next academic year.

**Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities**

As Principal I would like to express my gratitude to the teaching staff for organising the following activities for students in 2018/2019.

Athletics, Football, Soccer, Hurling, Self-defence, Rugby, Educational tours, Field trips, Poetry and Creative writing competitions, Theatre trips, Maths Week, Science Week, Chess Club, Horse riding , Enterprise, All manner of career trips, trips to Dáil Eireann, Green School Committee, Amber Flag committee, Wellbeing committee, Young SVP, Peace and Justice committee, every kind of a Transition Year trip among other things.

The 42 Transition Year students contributed hugely to the image of the school through the projects they got involved in and through how they represented themselves, their families and school during Work Experience. They were involved in many projects and initiatives during the year. To mention but a few, enterprise, Carrick-on-Suir Motor Club completion (where they won a prize of €1000), Science Week in the library, the mini garden project, visits to the old peoples home, etc.

As a result of the successes of the current Transition Year we hope to have 51 students engaged in next year’s programme. We have applications from 3 Spanish students to participate in the programme next year.

**Child Protection**

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. Michael Walsh and the Deputy DLP is currently Mr Myles Mitchell. The Board will carry out its annual review of its Child Protection Policy in February 2020.

All staff members have now completed their Tusla and PDST training. Mr Walsh and Mr Mitchell have attended DLP and DDLP training from SPHE and the new model of inspections for child protection matters.

There are plans to put windows in all classroom and office doors as is required by Child Protection legislation.

During the year I felt the need to contact Tusla on one occasion with reference to concerns I had about four students. I was advised not to report he matter of concern but to monitor it.

**Health and Safety**

The appointment of a health and safety coordinator has resulted in a level of oversight in what we provide in the school. The Fire Safety strategy was somewhat lacking. This year we have had the mandated three fire drills which were a success in terms of pointing out some flaws and in the evacuation of the building.

Teachers have engaged in the process of monitoring their own working environment. By teachers notifying potential problems to the management many issues have been avoided. Some teachers are reluctant to engage in the process as of yet.

An accident and incident recording process has been initiated where teachers are mandated to record and submit any incidents that occur under their watch.

Teachers attention has been drawn to the “Guideline on Managing Safety, Health and Welfare in Post Primary schools” with particular reference being given to subject specific templates. Our Science Inspections revealed areas where our practise could be enhanced.

**Wellbeing**

The area of wellbeing provision has come under focus with the advent of the New Junior Cycle. There is a requirement for 135 hours wellbeing per year for Junior Cycle students. We hope to have these hours planned for in next year’s timetable.

It is evident that the school community in ERSS looks at all school activities through the lens of a wellbeing microscope. The Health and Safety, Child Protection, Code of Behaviour, Pastoral Care, Student Support and for that matter all school policy is aimed at providing a safe and caring community where we can all reach our full potential.

With this in mind there is an active wellbeing committee that is a credit to the school in terms of the work they do and the vision they have for the school.

**Student Support and Pastoral Care**

All teachers continued to take a keen interest in the pastoral care of their students. Many teachers have taken on a voluntary pastoral role of Class Tutor in order to support students. In addition, the student support committee meets regularly to discuss pertinent issues that we have become aware of in relation to student care.

The school’s Guidance Counsellor has been away on maternity and parental for the past year. Due to a shortage of similar teachers we were unable to replace her so the level of support for students lacked this element of support.

A dedicated Pastoral Care Co-ordination Team continued to be very active in 2018-2019. Comprising the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplains, Counsellor, Learning Support Teachers, and other interested teachers, this team met as often as necessary and ensured that adequate provision was made for all students experiencing particular difficulties in school and in their personal lives. This Pastoral Care team worked closely with the Year Head team and the Wellbeing committee in delivering a whole school approach to student support.

One of the striking elements of the school is the fact that it is a genuinely caring community. It appears all members of the community are valued, included and minded in their journey through school. The current sixth year have 5 student who have found this journey very difficult.

**Student Empowerment and Voice**

The Students’ Council operated with the support of Mr Noel Casey, a former teacher in the school. It continues to be a well-run organization that makes a valued contribution to the day to day running of the school.

In the current year the council has part funded the student of the week initiative. This is an initiative to acknowledge students who are making positive contributions to school life. They have also organized the non-uniform days looking after the collection of the monies and deciding on where these monies should be allocated.

They have also been the student voice in terms of policy ratification and initiatives carried out in the school. They have acted as members of focus groups brought about to lead change in all elements of school life.

**Code of Behaviour**

Students continued to co-operate in a very positive way with the school’s behaviour code as evidenced by favourable comments throughout the year from teachers and visitors to the school. The Board thanks the students for their excellent behaviour. There was an element of confusion as to the steps involved in applying the code. This was discussed and clarified as to each person’s role in the application of the code.

Student’s cooperation with the code is manifested in the figures. There have been very few representations made to Year Heads regarding poor student behaviour. To date only seven students have been put on a Principals Report. Three students have been given internal suspensions.

The new code was taken to the next level through the introduction of the student of the week initiative. At writing all but 30 of the students had been nominated for their positive contribution to the school. It is hoped to bring a restorative justice approach to dealing with the code in future years. This will necessitate training and the good will of the Year Head team if it is to be effective.

This year we focused on students leaving class for various reasons. We clamped down on them going to lockers/toilet during and between classes. We also focused on school uniform in terms of them wearing hoodies in class. These two minor items of enforcement need 100% cooperation from all teachers. To date we do not have this total commitment to these two elements of the code.

We would hope to include students wearing ties next year as they have become sloppy in this element of the code.

Attendance and punctuality are of concern. We will need to put in a concerted effort to improve both of these areas. Vsware gives us the tool to monitor both. It is again down to teachers recording lateness properly and then putting in a sanction for habitual offenders.

**School Environment**

The school environment continues to cause concerns. There is a problem with litter in the school. Many students don’t have a problem throwing litter on the ground. They are resistant to use recycling bins that have been provided. There is a problem with bins being emptied. The Green School committee has done Trojan work in these aspects but there needs to be more work done to shift the culture.

The heating system is old and probably inefficient. The school lighting system is of a similar status. There is a tendency for many people to leave on the lights, leading to excess energy use and the consequences of same.

The roof continues to be a problem. In Autumn there were many leaks. We had representative from Nevin builders, the company who replaced the roof a few years ago out to investigate. It seems the problems are caused by people climbing up on the roof and damaging it. Most of it is repaired but there still needs to be work done. The leaf guards were removed which led to leaves and bottles and balls ending up in the down pipes. This led to blockages of the pipes and as a result, overflow of the pipes into the school.

The lockers are not the best. We intend to look at them to see if there is a more suitable type available.

Some of the classrooms are untidy and dirty. These classrooms will need replacement flooring to improve the situation.

**Loss of Teaching Time**

Part and parcel of operating the school is time lost to learning and teaching. This occurs for the following reasons:

* Staff illness both certified and uncertified
* Staff training
* Student involvement in extracurricular activities.

**Parental Involvement and Contact**

The school organized information meetings for parents in 2018/2019 on the following matters:

• New 1st year students

• Information meetings (Student Support and SEN)

• Subject choices for 5th years

• Parent-teacher meetings for every year group

• TY Graduation Afternoon

• 6th Year graduation Mass

• Open Days

• One-to-one meetings with the parents of incoming students where needed.

All meetings were very well attended by parents. The school website was updated weekly and contained a great deal of information for parents on current news as well as all school policies. For families without internet access, hard copies of all updates and policies continued to be available from reception. Several useful links were added to the website through the year.

The Principal, Deputy Principal and all teachers were available on an appointment basis to meet parents to discuss any concerns about students. Representatives of the Parents’ Council met with Mr. Walsh, Principal, on a regular basis to liaise on school matters.

Mr. Walsh addressed the Parents’ Council A.G.M., and attended all council meetings thereafter. At the AGM two parents were elected to represent the parents on the newly formed Board of Management.

The parents council was actively involved again this year and the events organised were;

* Annual Fund raiser
* Mock interviews for sixth years
* School Library
* Financial Assistance
* Parent voice for policy development
* Tea and coffee provision for different events

It gave me a great boost to work with the members of the council who are keen to support the school in its mission and vision.

**School Development Planning**

All policies that make up the school plan are available on the school’s website: The following have been the main developments in school planning throughout 2018 – 2019:

* The ongoing review of subject development plans in all departments in the context of the new Junior Cycle with an emphasis on the provision of 400 hours of wellbeing for the incoming first years in 2020.
* The ongoing development of our Digital Learning Strategy
* Staff continues to develop numeracy and literacy resources for our SIP programme.
* The development of our SIP in the area of learning and teaching
* The continued development/integration of the new Code of Behaviour.

**Professional Development of Staff**

A Staff Handbook is in the process of being developed by our Teacher Mentor coordinator. This will support teacher’s in their daily working lives. Teachers attended DES run by PDST JCT, SPHE among others. As part of the Croke Park Hours teachers were given the opportunity to engage in personal planning and professional development. This appears to be a very good use of the hours. To date most teachers have engaged in the process.

The teaching staff also engaged in detailed subject planning development. We have had the assistance of sustained support from PDST in the preparation of templates for our planning.

ERSS is part of the Droichead mentoring programme with Professionals Support Team training fully completed by three members of staff. Newly Qualified Teachers will be monitored, observed and completed in the completion of their induction modules. This is seen as a positive development from all those involved where teachers are openly sharing best practice.

**Board of Management**

The BOM dealt with a number of complex issues throughout its first year including, building projects, admissions, policy development and HR. An agreed report was available to all stakeholders on the schools website from February.

The new Board was constituted in October and has worked well on the main issues that came to their attention. Four of the new members engaged in the training provided by the JMB. Great credit is due to all Board members for the professional attitude they take in regard to their responsibilities as Boar members.

**Financial Accountability**

The BOM has appointed a financial sub-committee that monitors the schools financial position. This committee is supported by the school secretary, the schools accounts person and the school auditor. Audited accounts were submitted to the DES and the trustees as required.

With the advent of me as new Principal to the school there were a number of extra ordinary expenses. These included training and professional development, the installation of VSware, the installation of an up to date CCTV system, the installation of a new telephone system and a fairly large expenditure on upgrading the existing computer systems including the introduction of Office 365 and the purchase of new computers. The ICT coordinator pinned down our computer consultants to a provision.

I would like to mention the contribution of parents/guardians to the school through the voluntary contribution over the past year.

**Community Links**

The BOM is particularly appreciative of the assistance provided by the local Carrick-on-Suir and wider community in providing work experience placements for Transition Year and LCVP students.

In addition, the school appreciates the generosity of local clubs and organisations in sharing their facilities with our staff and students. We continue to have strong links with the local community and would like to acknowledge the help given to the school community from the school Chaplin, The school’s JLO (from and Garda), the local shops and businesses, WIT, MSD, Sanofi, Carrick-on-Suir Motor Club to mention but a small few.

The school has also interacted on formal levels with:

1. Tusla – regarding Child Protection, Family Conferences and Attendance

2. NEPS – Educational Psychological Assessments and Friendship Programme and information to our Pastoral Care Team on Student Support Programmes.

3. CAHMS – Behavioural and psychiatric support.

4. NCSE – Applications for Special Education Needs 5. Feeder Primary Schools – Student passports.

**Conclusion**

As a new Principal to the school and a new Principal my thanks goes to the students, parents and staff working as part of the school community for their support and commitment to the education and wellbeing of all our students.

At a time of large scale change in education the school community at the CBS Carrick-on-Suir has led and contributed to huge change in curriculum, policy and wellbeing requirements as required by the DES. Along with this change came a new Principal with some ideas of his own. It is great credit to all members of the school community who have welcomed me and engaged in the transition to the ERSS Carrick-on-Suir.

Thank you all.