



Annual Report of the Board of Management to the Parents of Franciscan College Gormanston, Gormanston, Co Meath for the school year 2015 – 2016

The purpose of this annual report of the Board of Management of Franciscan College Gormanston is to provide a summary of information on the operation of the college in line with the requirements of the Education Act 1998.

This report serves as an addition to the information provided on the college's website www.gormanstoncollege.ie, the regular newsletters issued by the college, correspondence to parents, our College annual, presentations to parents on designated evenings throughout the academic year, the School Self Evaluation report for the academic year and the School Improvement Plan.

Overview of 2015 – 2016 Academic Year:

Franciscan College Gormanston is a voluntary Catholic school for both boys and girls under the Trusteeship of the Order of Friars Minor. The college officially became a non - fee paying voluntary school in September 2014. Approval was granted to join the Free Education scheme in January 2014. Our student population then stood at 204 students. Enrolment has doubled since then with the current numbers on roll standing at 370 students. We anticipate further growth in 2016 / 2017. The rapid rise in student numbers is placing significant challenge on the school building and infrastructure with the school requiring support from the DES in terms of additional accommodation investment. While this will provide a short term solution to our accommodation needs the school has been identified and approved as part of the Government's wider investment in a capital programme for schools. This is scheduled for the academic year 2019 onwards. The DES has also agreed to visit the school to carry out a comprehensive technical assessment of our school layout and infrastructure. At the time of writing this is yet to happen.

Teaching and Learning continues to be the main focus of our college with our performance in State examinations continuing to reach and surpass national averages.

While our achievement above the national average continues to be strong we must now examine the impact of our increase in enrolment and changing student dynamic including wide ranging abilities. There is a need to carefully analyse our curriculum model at Leaving Cert and plan (where it is necessary) to introduce (if appropriate) a programme of study that can provide a more vocational option / s and combine it with subjects traditionally studied at Leaving Cert. This may be the LCVP programme or similar. This will be to cater for a growing number of our students who cannot manage / struggle with the traditional LC programme.

The most recent whole school inspection took place on 22nd and 23rd May 2014. This "Follow - Through Inspection" examined whether recommendations identified in the WSE of May 2009 had been achieved / met by the school. A key summary of findings published on 30th July 2014 stated:

- *“There has been very good progress in most of the recommendations of the WSE report with progress noted in all recommendations.”*
- *“A very positive spirit predominated and where concerns remained, these were constructively expressed.”*

A further incidental inspection took place on 8th December 2014. While it should be noted that this inspection did not include a published report the focus of the inspection was on the quality of teaching and learning demonstrated in the range and quantity of lessons formally observed by the Inspector. The feedback “evidence” provided by the Inspector concluded:

- *“The lessons observed ranged in quality from Good to V Good....”*
- *“Good, solid teaching observed.....”*
- *“Evidence of students’ taking responsibility for their own learning.....”*
- *“Teaching was clear in all lessons observed with good communication of concepts.....”*
- *“All classes well managed with discipline very good.....”*

In September 2015 the college was inspected in a subject / departmental capacity for Guidance. Again, this was a very successful inspection with the inspectorate reporting:

- *“Quality of guidance and student supports provided collaboratively by the staff is of a very high standard.”*

The college is staffed by a committed and dedicated staff of teachers and education support personnel as well as ancillary and administrative staff. The college is strengthened by the College Trustees, Board of Management, Parents Association, Student Council, College Prefects and the local community.

A significant challenge of the past academic year which continues is the co-existence of two organisations on the same campus. Franciscan College Gormanston (the college) and Gormanston Park (a commercial enterprise and completely separate from the college). The physical proximity to Gormanston Park remains very challenging.

Members of the Board of Management together with the Senior Management team strongly feel that the educational mission is of paramount importance but at the same time fully understand the rationale and essential need for the financial supports put in place by the Trustees in the form of the Gormanston Park venture.

We acknowledge the significant financial contribution already extended to the College over many years by our Patron.

Our mission has always been to articulate and facilitate a compelling educational experience for our students delivered within the framework of a strong Franciscan tradition. That is our core business. This is firmly encapsulated within our Mission Statement:

Franciscan College Gormanston is an educational establishment wherein Catholic values are promoted in accordance with the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

Its aim is to create an environment that is safe, a centre of learning committed to the personal development of each individual student, and where the dignity of all is promoted and cherished.

It will strive to create accountable and principled students in the Ireland of today and in the wider world, in accordance with our Franciscan tradition for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland.

Equally, we are deeply conscious of the importance of securing viability and sustainability for the college into the future. The College and Board of Management are firmly of the view that a successful and effective public / private partnership can be established with Gormanston Park. The challenges that currently exist are well known and understood on all sides. It should be stated for the record that our priority is education. The best possible outcomes for our students. That level of responsibility and accountability should convey a certain authority to act in the very best interests of the college and its business.

As referenced earlier the college continues to engage with the Department of Education and Skills with regard to appropriate future provision. The college is in a transitional phase and has been in negotiation now for some years with the Department specifically in relation to the school's capacity to successfully manage a rapidly rising enrolment. While we are very pleased that the college has been identified as part of a wider capital programme in Education there is an immediate pressing need to increase our classroom capacity. We anticipate that this will be possible in the coming academic year.

In common with many schools we found the past year very challenging from a budget perspective and we fully appreciate the on going support we receive from many parents in the form of voluntary contributions. Quite simply, we would not be able to provide the range and variety of service without that support. I am referring directly to the organisation of specialist and dedicated school weeks i.e. Bullying Awareness Week, Study Skills Week, Wellfest Week.

College Enrolments and Staffing:

College enrolment continues to grow with numbers now reaching 439 students at the time of writing this report (October 2016). There are 21 permanent / CID teachers and 8 RPT teachers (regular part time) teachers available to the school as per the allocation from the DES (Department of Education and Skills). The Board of Management also directly employ one SNA (Special Needs Assistant), three administrative staff and one caretaker. The Board of Management have entered into a one year service contract to provide a Cleaning regime for the designated college building and schedule. Trends in primary school enrolment in the school's catchment area as well as key demographic trends indicate a conservative school population of 700+ students by 2020.

Trusteeship, Management and Representation:

Gormanston continues to work closely with its Trustees, Order of Friars Minor who maintain close connections with the college. The Board of Management for the new academic year 2016 – 2017 will be chaired by a new Chairperson nominated by the College Trustees. For this report the BOM is chaired by Mr Conor O'Brien. The Board meet monthly and it is constituted in line with the Articles of Management for secondary schools. The Board continues to be supported by a very active Parents Association who also meet regularly. It comprises of representatives of parents of current students in the school and is chaired by Ms Louise Landers. The Student Council is elected annually as are the 6th year prefect cohort. All of these bodies played a very active role during the academic year 2015 – 2016.

Financial Management and Accounting:

The financial management of the College is conducted under the JMB / AMCSS guidelines and is in strict compliance with DES requirements. The school accounts are externally audited for the Board of Management and follow best practice guidance. A Finance Sub Committee also meets monthly and reports directly to the Board of Management. The school accounts and annual budget are

presented annually to the College Trustees. School finances continue to be monitored and further prudent financial management is required into the future particularly in view of current lack of investment by the DES for the college and increase in utility charges. The Board of Management has been extremely pro-active in addressing college expenditure and has a detailed budget plan in place each year. The College Trustees continue to support the College financially with small budget deficits and the College are very grateful for this subvention. It is understood that the College are working towards a model of financial sustainability.

Extra Curricular Activities:

The Clann system has always defined our College. It is our sense of belonging, our DNA. Staff and students have re energised the system this year and it is our common objective to maintain it into the future and help it grow. For our students the allegiance and loyalty to the Clann is vital, personal and imperative. It stays with all of them even when they become past pupils. We have a duty therefore for generations of students to come to build capacity in the Clann system and help it flourish in Gormanston. However, it would not be possible without the generous fund raising activities of the "Friends of Franciscan College Gormanston". A House system is not funded by the State. It is not part of any State capitation. I am therefore very pleased that the Parents Association have joined forces with the "Friends of Franciscan College Gormanston" to drive this very worthy initiative on behalf of all our current and prospective students.

We held a very successful Inter - cultural day in our school community in May 2016. For the very many and varied activities and events we held this year I was absolutely struck by the sheer diversity of this occasion. Colour, pride, admiration, honour, vibrancy, inclusivity, the representation of so many countries through the mediums of language, poetry, music, dance and cuisine. A wonderful testament to our school and our students.

We also had many non sporting achievements:

A series of themed weeks: Study Skills / Bullying Awareness / College Awareness / Wellfest Week, Drop everything and Read week / Maths week, Seachta na Gaeilge

Key Occasions: Opening and dedication of our new library by the former Rose of Tralee, Past pupil Eleyshea Brennan. Our Christmas Carol service. The commemoration of 1916 and the raising of our National Flag as well as the immensely powerful reading of the Proclamation.

Fundraising for Syria, bake sales, non-uniform days.

College annual publication (led by students). Christmas door competition. Lunchtime clubs (Chess, computers, jenga). Art competition. TY mentors. Prefect jobs and responsibilities. College choir. Clann events – debating, Quizzes, Feis.....

Sporting Achievements:

Really successful Sports day and the winning of the academic year - Clann Froinsias.

Badminton. Teams for the future.

Girls Basketball (so unlucky for the second time) – Next year!

Our College soccer teams.

North Leinster Athletics.

Junior and Senior GAA teams - The Senior GAA team qualified for the North Leinster Final for the 2nd time in 3 years in February 2016. They won the Leinster title in 2014.

Junior and Senior Rugby teams - Senior Rugby team – Leinster Champions 2016.

Conclusion:

The Board of Management wishes to express its appreciation to the hard working, committed and enthusiastic staff of Franciscan College Gormanston led by the management team and supported by the middle management team of Year Heads, Transition Year Coordinator, Guidance Counsellor and SEN coordinators. It also commends the work of our ancillary staff, administrative staff and College Rector. The Parents Association deserve special mention for their loyalty and perserverance and their all round efforts to support the school, drive fund raising initiatives and positively build the reputation of the College in its changed status.

The vast majority of our students are deserving of special praise for their excellent behaviour, cooperation and their academic and extra curricular achievements. The Board remain pleased that the religious ethos and characterisitic spirit of the College is being promoted. The BOM will continue to fulfil the Mission Statement of the College.

Dermot Lavin

Secretary to the Board of Management

October 2016

Conor O'Brien

Chairperson

October 2016