

# **MINUTES OF THE OATLANDS COLLEGE PARENTS' COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019.**

## **CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS:**

The Chairperson, Marie Kilmartin, welcomed everyone to the AGM. She introduced the officers of the Parents' Council and explained that she and her Co-Chair, Sharon Gleeson, would be stepping down this year.

The Chairperson welcomed the Principal, Caroline Garrett, the Head Boy, and Deputy Head Boy who would be contributing at the Q&A session after the AGM to give a students' perspective on various issues.

The Chairperson then thanked the parents present for their continuing and vital support to the work of the Parents' Council throughout the year. She stressed the importance of this continuing teamwork and collaboration between parents, the Council, and the School.

The Chairperson outlined the composition and function of the Council. She said the Council were a positive, talented, and committed team of people who meet on the first Tuesday of every month. There are representatives on the Council from all the year groups. The Parents' Council works hard throughout the year to support the Principal and the school. She explained that two parent representatives also sit on the Board of Management, having been elected by the parent body for a three-year term, providing a link between the Parents' Council and the Board of Management.

Typical activities undertaken by the Parents' Council include:

Hosting a welcome meeting with refreshments for new parents after the AGM;

Providing refreshments at Parent Teacher meetings throughout the year;

Hosting Information Evenings for parents of Transition Year and new First Year students;

Hosting Graduation nights and the Pre-Debs Reception;

Hosting information evenings for parents such as the information meeting organised last year to inform parents of the new Junior Cycle Curriculum;

Organising the annual book and uniform sale every June;

Organising the Bag2School Collections which is an important fundraiser for the school;

Helping with make-up, costumes, props, tuck shop, raffle etc during the Transition Year musical;

Contributing to the 6<sup>th</sup> Year Leave Taking Day and BBQ which is a very special occasion for the boys;

Contributing to School Policy Making – the Council will review, endorse, and provide feedback on different items;

Organising the Christmas Fair, the school's biggest fund-raising event.

Next week the Council will host a non-alcoholic reception at the Debs night which is a very special evening for the returning boys, their parents, and teachers.

One very special occasion last year was the Sing While You Can Concert to raise funds for Motor Neurone Disease. This was a wonderful occasion, organised by Bob Brown, the Deputy Principal, and Oatlands College, for Fr. Tony Coote, our Chaplain, and a close friend of the school, who suffered from the disease. A host of well-known artists took part, and the Parents' Council helped with the fundraising for this event. Over €6,000 was raised for research into Motor Neurone Disease.

A slideshow of various school events over the past year was then displayed and the Chairperson discussed in more detail the role played by the Parents' Council in each major event. The Transition Year Musical is one such event and it is an incredible experience for the boys and girls who participate in it. The standard of production in the school is very high, so much so that the musicals are like a West End production. The Parents' Council work behind the scenes at the musical, helping with costume changes and coordination. The Council also help with make-up for the cast, under the guidance of the theatrical make-up students from Blackrock Further Education Institute.

The Christmas Fair is the Parents' Council biggest fundraising initiative, and we start planning for it now. This year's Fair will be held on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December. We seek support from business in the local area and in the wider areas with a catchment of pupils attending Oatlands. The support from local business means we can offer quality prizes in our bumper raffle at the Fair.

We also offer banner sponsorship to local businesses and this has proved to be very popular. It raises additional funds for the school and provides the sponsoring business with high visibility in the local area. The banner is displayed on the school buildings in advance of the fair and remains in place over the holidays. Our fair is also supported by local politicians such as Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor and Minister Josepha Madigan.

Other fundraising initiatives include: Our annual Book & Uniform sale; our Christmas Fair Bumper Raffle; raffles for concert tickets; our very popular Silent Auction; and our Bags2School Initiative which is held twice yearly. We donate 10% of the proceeds from Bags2School to the Laura Lynn charity.

The Chairperson then invited Tara Kavanagh to present the Treasurer's Report.

#### **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

A PowerPoint presentation provided a detailed breakdown of expenditure and income over the last year.

The 2018 Christmas Fair raised approximately €15,000.

The Battle of the Bands is also another important fundraiser for the school and is also a great night out with bands from many Leinster schools taking part in the competition.

Total expenditure for the current year was €5,865. Our expenditure was not overly large in terms of the monies raised over the year and as a result the Parents' Council were able to give €17,000 to the School Development Fund last year.

The Treasurer stressed the importance of parent support to the work of the Parents' Council and encouraged parents who were not able to commit to serving on the Council to consider helping as volunteers at different events or through supporting raffle ticket sales. Concluding her presentation,

Tara Kavanagh mentioned that the Financial Report will be published on the Parents' Council section of the School website in due course.

The Chairperson then spoke briefly about the Battle of the Bands Competition hosted annually by Oatlands College. This is a substantial undertaking with a €500 prize for the winning band. We have participants from as far afield as Drogheda and Wicklow. The competition judges are external industry professionals who provide invaluable feedback to all participants in what is a hugely positive experience for all the competing bands. As the Junior Cycle curriculum becomes more project and assignment-based, this provides a useful experience for music students and the feedback from those participating and their teachers is very positive.

The Chairperson then handed over to the Principal, Caroline Garrett, for her report.

#### **PRINCIPAL'S ADDRESS:**

Caroline Garrett welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded those present that she would be hosting a Question & Answer session after the meeting at which the Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy would also be in attendance. She thanked Marie Kilmartin and Tara Kavanagh for their presentations.

Last year the School engaged in significant fundraising for Motor Neurone Disease charities in support of Fr. Tony Coote, the School Chaplain, who sadly passed away during the summer. He was a huge friend to the School and is missed terribly. The School was involved in the hugely successful Sing While You Can Concert, and the Transition Year pupils organised Play While You Can fundraising matches. Over €50,000 for Motor Neurone Disease was raised by the School. The Parents' Council provided invaluable help to the school in these endeavours.

The Principal stressed that both the Parent and Student Councils provide a voice in what happens in Oatlands College and feedback from both councils is very important.

The school re-opened on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August with a current student body of just under 550 pupils. The School is constantly growing and next year will take in 120 First Year students. The Admissions Policy offers siblings a place in the school, and in 2020 the school will offer 30 places to siblings of current pupils.

This year's Leaving Certificate results were again excellent and above the national average. The school did not achieve three-in-a-row with eight H1s, but pupils did achieve both seven H1s and six H1s. 28% of pupils achieved over 500 points and 65% achieved over 450 points.

The School Career Guidance teacher, Mr. Brian Mooney, retired this year after many, many years in Oatlands College and he will be sadly missed. However, the school is delighted to welcome Ms. Clodagh McDonagh as its new Career Guidance teacher.

The school has made an application for increased enrolment to the Department of Education. Oatlands College is also on the cusp of developing new playing pitches. There had been plans to use some land for a new building development and the school was engaged in a long struggle to retain the land for school use and for the benefit of Oatlands pupils which was ultimately successful. The school received consistent help in this regard from Minister Mary Mitchell-O'Connor and the Principal took the opportunity to publicly acknowledge and thank the Minister for her invaluable support.

The Education Act of 1998 provided for the formation of a Parents' Council in every school. However, a Parents' Council had already been established in Oatlands College before this time. The

Principal acknowledged the work of the Parents' Council in their fundraising activities for the School Development Fund.

This money has been used to undertake the recent refurbishment of the Home Economics Room. Home Economics Social & Scientific is offered as a Senior Cycle subject choice; however, Health & Nutrition can now be offered to First Years and Home Economics will be introduced as a short course in the new Junior Cycle Curriculum.

The Principal then spoke about her involvement with the Parents' Council and mentioned how much she enjoys attending Parent Council meetings and the good friends she has made there. All school policies relevant to the Parent's Council are reviewed by them and feedback offered. Relevant new legislation, such as the new Irish Exemption and Reduced Timetables, is also discussed and considered by the Parents' Council. Uniform, subject choices and timetable/calendar decisions are other issues discussed with the Parents' Council.

The School and the Parents' Council collaborate for the benefit of Oatlands College. The Principal informed those present that Parent Council contact names and contact details are on the school website and any suggestions or problems raised with the Parents' Council will be brought to her attention. Other issues not relevant to the Council can be raised directly with her. All parents are automatically members of the Parents' Council. The Parents' Council draw up a contact list for 1<sup>st</sup> Year parents and this can be very useful for the entire time the boys are in the school, and particularly useful up to Transition Year. This is a voluntary contact list but is very helpful to new parents.

The Principal commented that serving as a member on the Parents' Council and Board of Management in St. Louis' School provided her with an invaluable insight into the way the school was run, and her children saw her commitment to their education and their school. Serving on the council provided her with the opportunity to give something back to her children's school. The Principal encouraged those present to consider becoming involved in the Parents' Council which is not only a very rewarding experience but is also great fun.

The Principal expressed her sincere thanks to the outgoing Chairpersons, Marie Kilmartin and Sharon Gleeson, for their outstanding hard work and commitment over the years; they were fantastic to work with and will continue as members of the Parents' Council. She also expressed her thanks to Phil Hogan, whose son has now left the school and who has stepped down as Treasurer, for her hard work over the past year. The Principal thanked Tara Kavanagh and Mary O'Sullivan, the new officers on the Parents' Council. She then expressed her thanks to the two Parent Representatives on the Board of Management, Una O'Brien, and Oliver Seery, who attend both Board of Management and Parent Council meetings. Oliver Seery is stepping down from his role on the Board of Management this year and the Principal noted she could not thank him enough for his sage advice, sense of humour and exceptional commitment and contribution to the work of the Board of Management and the Parent's Council during his tenure. The Principal also expressed her thanks to Katherine Looby and Barbara Carrick for their hard work in organising the annual Battle of the Bands which is an onerous undertaking.

In conclusion, the Principal invited those present to attend the Question & Answer session which would be held after a short break for refreshments. She wished those present and their sons a very successful year in Oatlands.

The Chairperson thanked the parents present for attending and said the Parents' Council are always open to new members joining. The Council welcomes ideas and suggestions from the parent body and these can be submitted through the school office or via the Parents' Council email or contact details which are available on the website.

Marie Kilmartin concluded by thanking all those present for their continuing support and encouragement for the Parents' Council.

**THE MEETING THEN CONCLUDED**