**The Board of Management: What, Why, When and Who?**

All national schools are obliged to have a Board of Management to oversee the running of the school. The Department of Education lays down how the Board should be constituted (i.e., how many people should be on the Board, who is entitled to sit on it, etc.) and other rules as to how the Board should operate.

Our Board consists of seven members currently, with one place unfilled at the moment due to a resignation. They are:

Rev. Canon Mark Gardner (Archbishop’s Representative and Chairperson);

April Cronin, Principal of the school and Secretary to the Board.

Brian Honer, Parent Representative, father of Killian, Kyle and Kevin, and Treasurer.

Rebecca Fallon, Parent Representative, mother of Tom and Ivo, Minutes Secretary (shared).

Sharon Kinsella, Teachers’ Representative, Minutes Secretary (shared).

Isobel Gray, Archbishop’s Representative.

Margery Bell, Community Representative.

Kara Owen was also a Community Representative until she moved abroad last summer. We are currently looking for a replacement.

Although most of the members of the Board “represent” various interest groups, the Board itself is a **corporate body**. This means that the members make their decisions on the basis of what they feel is best for the school as a whole. For example, the Teachers’ Representative does not vote for a particular new policy because it is what the staff has asked her to do, but because she feels it is the best way forward for the school. A Parents’ Representative might be aware that a majority of parents would like to see a certain decision made, but if s/he feels that it would not be right, s/he is entitled, indeed obliged, to vote against it. No member of the Board is financially liable for any decision taken by the Board or debts incurred.

Elections are held every four years and we are half-way through the second year of the cycle. Parent representatives must include one mother and one father and must have children currently attending the school.

All members of the Board are voluntary and receive no payment for their work, except the Principal who receives a (small!) additional allowance for being the Board’s Secretary. The Board meets approximately every 6-8 weeks; occasionally emergency extra meetings are called to discuss an issue that has arisen between regular meetings and needs urgent attention. At least 5 members of the Board must be present at any meeting, and normally all members attend every meeting.

Confidentiality is a key requirement and the Board as a whole decides what outcomes from each meeting should be communicated, and to whom. Detailed minutes are taken and are open to inspection from the Department of Education at any time.

The Board’s remit is very wide and covers everything to do with running the school. This includes:

* Recruiting and appointing staff;
* Seeing to the maintenance of the building, heating, lighting etc.,
* Finance;
* Enrolment of pupils;
* Behaviour issues, especially major incidents of misbehaviour that might lead to suspension or exclusion of a pupil;
* School policies in every area – for example, ethos, health and safety, education, class allocation, behaviour, special needs, etc;
* Addressing complaints and conflicts.

As you can imagine it is a tall order to deal with all these in a two hour meeting every six weeks, so naturally the Board delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal and staff. Generally the Board has to ratify any major change of policy, any large expenditure, any exclusions of pupils, and any long-term addition to the staff.

With regard to complaints, conflicts, or requests, the Board expects that members of the school community will try to resolve these at the lowest level possible before referring them to the Board. For example, if two teachers were in conflict, it would be expected that they would try to resolve the difficulty themselves; if that failed, to ask the Principal to help them resolve it, and only at that stage to go to the Board.

While membership of the Board is quite a commitment, it is also an interesting way to participate in democratic decision making at a very local level and in an area which directly impacts on your child’s welfare. The current Board is extremely supportive of the school and its pupils and contributes in no small way to the success of the school.