

Wednesday 23rd November 2022

Ballinteer ETNS Board of Management Meeting

Agreed Minutes for Circulation to the School Community

Background: Agreed minutes are a redacted version of the minutes from the school's Board of Management meetings. They are also known as Community Minutes and are actively circulated and freely available to members of the school's community. They are censored as required under law to protect privacy. Items are also sometimes redacted if the matter is ongoing and further consideration by school governance is warranted. Community minutes are agreed to by all members of the school's board prior to their release.

Abbreviations: PTA, Parents and Teachers Association; BoM, Ballinteer Educate Together National School Board of Management; DE, Department of Education

Circulation: School staff, PTA, parents/guardians, Ballinteer ETNS website

Attendance: Colette Kavanagh (CK), Rory O'Neill (RO'N), Paul O'Dwyer (PO'D), Jim O' Leary (JO'L), Anne-Marie Cashman (A-MC), SJ Schramm, (SJS)

Apologies: Patrick Flynn (PF), Mary Carron (MC)

Topic	Decision / Action to be taken
1. Minutes and matters arising	<p>CK acknowledged the hard work carried out by former Chairperson, Robert Cochran, over the past 10 years.</p> <p>CK acknowledged the input of JO'L, PO'D, SJS, and PF in their detailed preparation of a response to the PTA's letter to the school's board. The letter raised concerns about the designation by the DE of a fenced pedestrian/cycle way directly alongside a section of the school's perimeter to a laneway separating the Walled Garden Development and Wyckham Avenue. The PTA acknowledged the BoM's response. No further correspondence has been received from the PTA in this matter.</p>
2. Chairperson's report	<p>CK, SJS, and A-MC attended training for members of school boards: the 'Board as a Corporate Entity'.</p> <p>SJS will attend the inaugural Education Buildings Ireland conference next week and prepare a corresponding report.</p> <p>CK reported on a meeting held with the Chairperson of the school's PTA and a further meeting with the PTA committee. It was agreed that both committees would work to improve communication between the two entities. Both parties agreed that a celebration committee to mark ten years since the school's inception is to be activated.</p>

2. Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report	Redacted for privacy.
3. Principal's Report	<p>PO'D explained that National Substitute Crisis has caused major difficulties covering teacher absences.</p> <p>PO'D gave an update on building matters.</p> <p>Board members agreed that the school's official opening and ten-year celebration would be combined. It was agreed that a sub-committee would steer the celebrations and should include teachers, school board members, and PTA representatives. Input from the Students Council would also be sought. May 2023 was proposed as a date for the celebration with consideration given to the weather, the long lead time for preparations, and that a June date might interrupt student public exams in the nearby Secondary School.</p> <p>A new policy for the Autism Classes is to be initiated. A draft is to be prepared for discussion at the next BoM meeting.</p>
4. Treasurer's Report	<p>JO'L presented the Annual Budget forecast for 2022 to 2023. Rising costs in heating, electricity, and cleaning were flagged.</p> <p>The annual accounts for 2021-2022 are being finalised before being sent to the auditors.</p> <p>Colette thanked JO'L and PO'D for their work in preparing and reviewing the school's budget and forecast.</p> <p>The school's September 2022 accounts were presented.</p> <p>Work on a Finance policy for the school is being undertaken.</p>
5. Anti-Bullying policy review and approval	<p>Members in attendance (quorum met) were satisfied with the review of the school's anti-bullying policy. PO'D will forward the mandated checklist to Educate Together and other parties as required.</p>
7. Intimate Care policy review and approval	<p>A new policy has been researched and drafted by AM-C.</p> <p>It describes the school's approach to the care of students when they are undressed or partially dressed, for example, helping a student with washing after a soiling incident; helping a student to use the toilet; changing nappies or carrying out a procedure that requires direct or indirect contact with an intimate area of a student; or any procedure carried out while the student is in a state of whole or partial undress.</p> <p>Advice and feedback on the draft will now be solicited from targeted sections of the school community. This work will be led by PO'D and A-MC.</p>
8. Class allocation statement	<p>This statement will be prepared and finalised for</p>

	review/ratification by the BoM at January's meeting.
9. Complaints Procedure policy	Deferred due to time constraints. Board members agreed to review the document before the next board meeting.
10. Hall use	<p>Foróige and Optimum and Precision Twirlers will use school facilities for their clubs/classes for an agreed cost.</p> <p>The school will advertise the facilities in local media/social media/community settings with a view to increasing the school's revenue. SJS will prepare a proposal relating to hiring of the hall, which will be reviewed at the next school board meeting.</p>
11. Kids Inc.	<p>The outside school hours care provider, Kids Inc., has indicated that there is high demand from parents for additional care places with them.</p> <p>Board members are evaluating the request and more information will be provided as soon as possible.</p>
12. Student Council connection	CK and SJS will ask permission of the Student Council to visit one of their meetings with the aim of connecting and building the relationship between these two vital entities in the school. SJS will liaise with the student council teacher co-ordinator to organise a suitable date and time.
13. School year length 2022-2023 (missed days)	PO'D advised that, after consideration of multiple factors, the school year would not be extended to make up for school closure caused by building delays.
14. Query about Critical Incident Management Policy	It was agreed that SJS would prepare folders for the Critical Incident Team as advised in the school's Critical Incident Management Policy.

Board shorts...

This informal addition to the Community Minutes is intended as a (hopefully) helpful and instructive brief from the school's board to the broader school community. It aims to provide additional details on selected outcomes and/or work in progress by the school's board.

Building update

*The school has been allocated an Eircode: D16 N6T0.

*Completion of the new footpath at Wyckham Way is eagerly anticipated by many! Those works were unfortunately disrupted by delays that were outside the school's direct control. Efforts by board members to support the completion of the pathway as soon as possible are ongoing. Updates will be provided as relevant information comes to hand.

*The general purpose (GP) hall has been undergoing its final checks and paperwork: watch this space!

*External lights on the school building have now been set to light at relevant times and a review of general street lighting hours on campus is underway.

Improving revenue through venue hire: request for parental assistance

Can you take awesome photographs, write a promotional press release, do you have advertising contacts, or do you do a bit of graphic design work? Members of the school's board would love to work with you to assemble a package for the promotion and management of hiring our hall to the community.

Revenue from this income stream is expected to be important to the school and will ultimately benefit our kids.

Contact SJ at sierrajuliette@protonmail.com if you can help.

Logos and inclusive pronouns for our policies – keeping up to date

The school's policies are being updated to replace gendered pronouns with inclusive pronouns and to furnish the documents with the school's stunning new logo, masterfully created by our very own PTA chairperson (for those who don't already know). This update will take place over the coming weeks and will be reflected on the school's website once completed.

School Board Training

Three of the school board's newest members attended training for Educate Together National School board members. The training focused on the Governance Manual for Primary Schools with a thoughtful and practical focus on governance essentials including compliance and privacy, pathways for relationship building and conflict resolution, ambassadorship, resources and support, legalities and more.

Critical Incident folders: request for PTA contact details to be included

The school's Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) advises that each member of the school's Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have a dedicated folder for reference and record keeping in case of a critical incident. These folders are currently being prepared and we would like to ask the PTA for their permission to include the name and contact phone number of PTA office holders in these folders. Please RSVP to SJ sierrajuliette@protonmail.com at your convenience.

Conference update: Education Buildings Ireland

A member of the board attended the inaugural DE-initiated Education Buildings Ireland conference (November 29-30, 2022) and has provided a report. This inspiring and forward-focused conference spoke to a number of issues relevant to our school including: the DE's overarching vision for the use of space in Irish schools, how to capture 'pockets of space' to enhance learning and connectivity for all children, the delivery of climate action to the school sector, education for sustainable development, and inclusive design principles for Special Education Needs schools. A more detailed report is attached below for those interested.

Car line update

We want to encourage our whole school community to be leaders together in road safety.

So...

1. Keep vigilant (drive very slowly, consider windows down);
2. Keep left (at all times to allow traffic to flow around the roundabout);
3. Keep kids off the road (do not let children alight before you are directed to a drop off space by the school's traffic monitor);
4. Keep in touch (stay with your car at all times when in the car line); and,
5. Keep connected (communicate kindly with community members who may not be aware of the safety tips above).

And finally, (perhaps most importantly), thank you!

A HUGE thank you from the school's board goes to the PTA and all participants in the preparation of the calendar, the Winter festival, parent-led classes and so much more! We know there is a tremendous amount of work going on behind the scenes. We are lucky to have such an active and generous community supporting our students and we are gratefully looking forward to the fruits of these events!

Education Buildings Ireland Conference & Exhibition, 29-30 November, 2022

Conference report

Author: SJ Schramm, parent

Conference aims:

The event aimed to present and promote ways to help create high quality learning environments for all students, with a focus on the funding, design, construction, management, and maintenance of schools.

Conference attendees:

Present was a large contingent of (particularly) senior employees in the DE, school principals, architects and engineers with special expertise in school design, school outfitters and other related suppliers, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), the National Council for Special Education, Heather Doyle (recipient: SEAI Young Energy Champion of the year), a small number of school board members.

Some key takeaways, in no particular order:

- The overarching vision presented was that a school is ideally a physically, socially, and emotionally supportive environment where anyone can be anything.
- The new builds or refurbishments of several schools were presented case-wise, and the challenges discussed. Many pictures and several first-hand accounts captured an array of solutions for the inspired use of all the different types of space within a school's bounds.
- Many ideas for the use of both indoor and outdoor 'pockets of space' were presented, the idea being that each of these spaces (no matter how small) functions to create opportunity for students (and other members of school community) to interact in novel and creative ways. For example:
 - Low lying walls encapsulating areas around main building entrances can create soothing marshalling areas to aid a students' transition from outside to inside the school;
 - An outdoor blackboard in almost any space creates a hub for expression and interaction;
 - Small areas for folding concrete stairs can set a stage for an outdoor classroom or a breakout group;
 - Bench seats along the walls outside classrooms, populated with pillows, can provide opportunities for quiet reflection, soothing, or reading;
 - Glass windows and strategically designed 'transition spaces' (where the floor surface inside, for example, matches the surface immediately outside) invite children seamlessly from indoors to the outdoors and *vice versa*;
 - Open classroom doors or windows with strategically placed work or art allow children from different classes to observe and absorb elements of work going on around them, helping to promote the school as a 'village' of learning in that way;
 - Marbles or mosaics adhered to the ground in patterns inspire curiosity and drive tactile learning;
 - Walls painted with numbers or shapes help inspire play in the space.

- I'm delighted to report that the session on inclusive design principles for special educational needs (SEN) schools was heavily over-subscribed with standing room only. The attendance reflected the high level of interest in developing spaces for SEN members of the community. Indeed, the last decade has seen a major growth in the need for special class placement options *e.g.*, in 2010 there were 214 Autism and Autistic Spectrum classes nationwide and in 2022 there are 1459 of same.
- The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) talk delivered information on the organisation's aims: to provide advice and support to teachers and parents in relation to SEN. The presentation highlighted that establishment of SEN classrooms within a school must be concomitant to a complete change of the school's culture. The NCSE can provide advice, research, and support around this strategy.
- The design principles of SEN classrooms and spaces are underscored by the idea that every child can go to school with their siblings, cousins, and friends and be part of one school in their local area. Key questions in their design and composition include:
 - How do buildings foster inclusion (light, circulation of the population, emotional safety of spaces, level changes...?)
 - What are the entrance spaces to SEN classrooms and are their transitional areas to aid the process (*e.g.*, low level walls soften the transition from inside to outside, in a way welcoming students and acting as a 'breakwater')?
 - How do students arrive at the school?
 - What are their social and mingling/connection/waiting spaces?
 - Is there a feeling of security and is the friendly face nearby?
 - Is there easy wayfinding, space to sit, breakout, play, connect (including outdoors), socialise?
- Informal learning spaces for the entire school community might be as important as formal learning spaces. They can:
 - Encourage learning in diverse ways;
 - Encapsulate community;
 - Drive cross-disciplinary learning (allowing different classes/groups to connect);
 - Promote quality, well-being, creativity, and innovation.
- Spaces can be created for:
 - Reflection (1-2 people);
 - Retreat from a central/busy area;
 - Collaboration (groups of a few or several);
 - Presentation;
 - Transition (moving from inside to outside the school and *vice versa*);
 - Social interaction;
 - Creativity.
- Ancillary spaces should range in their size and occupancy and should facilitate multi-age and multi-ability occupants.
- Schools should generally blend into the surrounding landscape, not impose upon it by whitewashing the surrounds.

- For more in depth information on schools designed for communities see the book: Community Schools by Helen Taylor and Sharon Wright.
- An outward looking school is connected to its locality and community. School spaces should:
 - Promote social interaction;
 - Permit fluid movement of users (limiting dead ends or circulating students through a central hub, for example);
 - Create a sense of belonging for the whole school community.
- How can schools be developed such that the whole community can flourish? How can the school spaces maximise what the community is about? For example, a school in Wales used a converted shipping container as a focal point for hands-on learning about food as well as a place where low-income families could stock up on free or reduced-price provisions. The development of spaces within and around the school should consider what the community might need and how that could be served since raising the community raises its students.
- There was strong focus on methods for delivering climate action to the school sector:
 - School managers aren't generally energy experts and schools don't have significant technical expertise on hand so DE solutions to carbon emission reductions must be simple and onsite. The Energy in Education programme will support these efforts.
 - Schools can monitor and report their energy use to the SEAI website to track their climate action. In the coming 12 months the site will be revamped and will be more instructive and graphic (for schools and students to better understand their energy usage).
 - Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): By 2030 all children will have the skills needed to promote sustainable development. Derived from UNESCO framework, priority action area 2 is 'transforming learning environments'. It covers leadership (cultural change required), ESD competencies and pedagogies in teaching and curriculum, resources for teaching and learning, whole-institute approaches, biodiversity, transport, building, waste, energy, and outdoor learning.
 - Climate Action and Sustainable Development will be a new leaving certificate subject from 2024.
 - Conference attendees were challenged to ask their students to point out where students thought the school could make improvements for climate change.