

KNOCKAVOE SCHOOL

DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015-2018



Vision

“Reaching for a Brighter Future”

Mission Statement

Working together, we provide a high quality education within a stimulating, nurturing, rights respecting environment. We inspire all pupils to attain their full potential and take their rightful place within our society.

Article 23 “A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity & independence & to play a part in the community.” UNCRC

Ethos & Core Values

“Schools must meet the needs of the pupils, not the other way around”

Minister for Education, John O`Dowd

“The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.” Article 3

*“Every child has the right to an education.” Article 28
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*

Knockavoe School is committed to:

- Respecting all pupils and their needs.
- Giving all pupils within Knockavoe a voice.
- Respecting staff, parents, guardians and all stakeholders.
- Providing a warm, welcoming, dynamic, supportive inclusive learning and teaching environment.
- Promoting and fostering a true rights respecting ethos through curricular, extra-curricular, community & sporting/activities for all.
- Ensuring all pupils can access the NI curriculum, at a level appropriate to their needs, through an individualised and child centred approach.
- Ensuring the highest standards of Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Child Protection are in place and are adhered to by all.
- Promoting and sustaining positive behaviour.
- Treating all within our school & community with dignity and understanding.
- Developing effective home/school/community/global links.

- Working together as a cohesive team for the benefit of all.
- Working collaboratively with Allied Health Professionals and other agencies to ensure the varied needs of all pupils are met.
- Maintaining & enhancing links with other schools, local community and Learning Community (DMLC) for the mutual benefit of all.
- Ensuring staff have opportunities to access appropriate continuing professional development.
- Embracing new opportunities and innovative approaches to meet the changing needs of pupils and the school.
- Fostering within our pupils a sense of dignity, confidence and enhanced self-esteem so that they may grow- morally, spiritually, academically & physically to take their place within their family, community and society.
- Challenging teachers, classroom assistants and others who work within our school community to evaluate, reflect upon and review their practice on a regular basis, to ensure that high quality learning and teaching guides all we do.

Articles 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 23, 28, 29 & 31 UNCRC

School Context

Knockavoe School is a purpose built, state of the art school which is situated in Melmount Gardens in Strabane. The school, which opened on this site in September 2005, was formerly known as Glenside Special School. Pupils come from the local, surrounding and wider environs. The school currently provides education for up to 130 pupils, aged 3-19 years. Pupils at Knockavoe have a wide range of abilities, severe and moderate learning needs, including those who have profound and multiple learning challenges, pupils on the autistic spectrum (ASD) and pupils with significant emotional/ challenging behaviours (SEBD).

Knockavoe provides a welcoming child-centred, supportive learning environment with a strong rights respecting ethos whereby meeting the needs of all the pupils is paramount. The school strives to provide high quality inclusive educational provision which allows pupils to develop on all levels: intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually, so that they may be well educated and equipped for life in the 21st century. Knockavoe is a Silver IIP Organisation. Knockavoe was successfully assessed and recognised as a Level 2 Rights Respecting School in Sept 2014 making us all very proud!

Article 12 “Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously” UNCRC

Articles 5, 6, 12, 13 & 23 UNCRC

Pupils, parents, Board of Governors and staff enjoy effective collaborative working relationships. The ETI Inspection Report of May 2010 indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, parents highlighted their children’s love of school and their appreciation of the staff, all of whom are held in high esteem. Governors expressed their appreciation of the dedicated work of staff, the welcoming ethos of the school and the friendliness of pupils. These views were further corroborated during our Investors in People process which resulted in Knockavoe being awarded Silver IIP Award in October 2011 and Retention of Recognition in Feb`15.

“People value the level of involvement they have had....this has given them a sense of empowerment and has helped to reinforce how their contribution will ensure the delivery of priorities, targets and objectives.”Feb`15 (IIP)

The school quite rightly prides itself on the very positive nature of relationships within and across classrooms and departments, within and between groups, the school and local & wider community and also within DMLC, Extended Schools and Extended Schools Cluster Groups. There are excellent relationships with Allied Health Professionals and all school staff. The school has a well-established global link with a school building project in Tanzania.

Ms Martina McComish is Principal of Knockavoe and Ms Grainne Dunne is Vice Principal.

The school consists of both Primary and Secondary Departments with 8 classes in each department. Caroline Clements is Head of the Primary Department and Jim Callaghan is Head of the Secondary Department. Catherine McGonagle is Literacy & Numeracy Co-Ordinator for the school.

Article 29 “Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full.” UNCRC

Strategies:

2(a)

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

All staff in Knockavoe recognise the wide range of pupil learning styles and they employ appropriate strategies to enable all pupils to maximise their learning.

These include:

- Provision of a happy, welcoming, safe environment for learning to take place.
- An attractive, stimulating and conducive learning environment.
- Careful planning taking account of staff/pupil ratios to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to maximise learning.
- Individual Education Plans (IEP) to ensure the key learning needs of pupils are appropriately met.
- Enabling pupils to develop independent skills appropriate to their developmental levels and abilities.
- Enabling pupils to take responsibility, where appropriate, for their own learning.
- Creating a positive, supportive learning environment which enables pupils to develop self esteem and self confidence.
- Creating differentiated learning tasks to meet the diverse needs of pupils.
- Recognising that learning is dependent upon collaborative practices with external agencies.
- Providing opportunities for pupils to showcase their achievements.
- Using ICT to support and enhance learning & teaching.

Providing quality teaching is an important element of the work at Knockavoe School in preparing our pupils and young adults for life beyond the school.

This was acknowledged by ETI in May 2010:

“All of the pupils are well prepared for leaving school and most leave with a range of accreditation and well established social skills. By the end of their time in school they have become more confident and are motivated learners.”

All teaching strategies at Knockavoe are employed to address the educational objectives within each pupil’s statement of special needs. Parental participation and involvement is a vital element in ensuring a cohesive approach in order to maximise pupil outcome. Courses to address parent awareness are facilitated and

parent/pupil reading sessions take place. Parents are partners who participate in the social, emotional and educational development of their child and many attend in-house training in various curricular or allied service areas.

Assessment

Knockavoe staff are committed to the ongoing cycle of assessment, monitoring and review. Teachers seek to ensure that assessment “of learning” and “for learning” is an integral part of all classroom teaching.

Knockavoe employs the following strategies:

- Baseline assessment.
- Using Assessment for Learning daily in classroom practice.
- Quest, Levels of Progression (Progression Booklet) and other assessment tools.
- Planned and spontaneous observations of play based learning.
- Individual pupil targets.
- Pupil self / peer assessment activities following lessons/projects.
- Regular monitoring , evaluation and review of IEP targets
- Examples of pupils’ work/ photographic and video evidence of pupil achievements and learning experiences.
- Effective links with parents through home/school diaries, parent/teacher meetings and Annual Reviews.
- Collaboration with Allied Health Professionals to discuss shared targets and approaches.
- Records of Achievement/Pupil Progress Files.
- Regular meetings of Assessment Team to inform, monitor and review strategies.
- Access to recognised Accreditation Qualifications at age 14+9(Vocational & Academic)
- Use of SIMS Assessment Manager.
- Music/Art / Alternative Therapies to meet pupils’ individual needs.
- Nurture provision

ETI noted in May 2010

“the high quality of the IEP`s, which match well the pupils` needs and abilities”.

2 (b)

The special, additional or other individual needs of all pupils are met in accordance with the educational provision within Knockavoe School.

Knockavoe School is specifically designed to cater for those pupils who have/are in the process of having, a statement of Special Educational Needs.

Articles 3, 23 & 28 UNCRC

2(c)

Promotion of Pupils' Health & Well-Being, Attendance, Positive Behaviour, Discipline and Child Protection:

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly to maximise benefit in all areas to each pupil and where appropriate, with the assistance of the EA(WR) Transport Department, arrive on time for school. Pupil attendance at Knockavoe is consistently high and any issues or concerns in relation to attendance/time-keeping are raised with parents/guardians, EWO and other relevant agencies to resolve these in the best interests of the pupil. School doors open at 9am to admit pupils and staff will receive pupils in the Foyer and escort to classes as necessary. No pupils to be dropped off and left at school by parents/guardians/taxis or buses before ensuring staff are present to receive them. Parents / Guardians must notify the school/bus driver if their child is ill or off for any reason so this may be recorded.

Staff use keypad entry system at side of main building on arrival. Fob system is in use throughout school day for access in/out main doors by staff with pupils.

The positive supportive ethos of the school contributes to ensuring that pupil attendance rates remain high. Effective communication between school and home facilitates respect and cooperation for all. Staff are vigilant, respectful and supportive to all.

Good behaviour and discipline are promoted through the provision of a safe, secure and calm learning environment which promotes respect and understanding of all individual pupil needs.

We expect all adults and pupils to behave in a responsible, respectful manner and to show courtesy and consideration to others at all times.

Collaborative relationships with parents promote sharing and exchange of information to ensure consistency of approach. Staff are provided with regular and relevant training to up skill them when responding to emotional/challenging behaviour or medical issues. Training is provided in-house or via external agencies.

Support from outside agencies, EA, RTU and Middletown is accessed when required.

Success and achievement for pupils is celebrated in class, at weekly/monthly assemblies, prize giving ceremonies, in Newsletters and at whole school celebrations. On-going praise & acknowledgement of achievement is an integral part of Knockavoe school culture and extends to all members of our school community.

Article 12 "Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously." UNCRC

Health & Well- Being is addressed via the physical, emotional, personal and social development elements of our school / N.I. Curriculum. We offer a weekly counselling service (currently provided by New Life Counselling) to referred pupils, alternative therapies to assist those pupils with additional identified needs and we liaise with local sports personnel (SDC) and SureStart to promote healthy living, healthy lifestyles and healthy homes. Circle Time methodology is promoted in classrooms to enable pupils to express their thoughts and feelings within a safe, secure setting. We promote a Nurture style provision for pupils with SEBD. Elected Student Council members represent the views of all classes within the school.

Article 3 "The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children." UNCRC

Knockavoe has a Healthy Eating Policy in line with WELB guidance. Themes/topic work within and across departments, reinforces our healthy eating policy. Pupils are encouraged to make healthy choices in the Canteen, on outings and for their daily break. A notice board in the Canteen area provides details of pupils who have allergies to food products or require specialist diets. The Canteen Supervisor liaises with the Principal/VP or Heads of Department, to plan and promote Healthy Eating Menus, Fun days, Theme Days, Bar-B-Q`s and Celebration Events.

Parents and class teams receive a copy of the Canteen Menu at the start of each school year and are notified of any changes in advance.

Article 24 "Every child has the right to the best possible health, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment." UNCRC

Local Sports Coaches provide training in various sporting activities and teacher Claire Grogan coaches the After Schools Netball Team every Tuesday & teacher Jim Callaghan coaches the Knockavoe Knights Football team every Wednesday. After Schools Clubs have planned physical activity programmes every Tuesday.

Local amenities such as Lifford Cinema, Play Stations, Riversdale Leisure Centre, Gym, Golf Driving Range and Recreational Sports facilities are integrated into pupil timetables as appropriate.

Article 15 "Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations." UNCRC

Child Protection

Child Protection Guidance from EA (WR) is adhered to at all times.

Knockavoe Designated Child Protection Officer is Caroline Clements and Deputy Designated CP Officers are Grainne Dunne and Jim Callaghan.

Knockavoe Designated Child Protection Governor is Ms Hayley Devine (Parent rep).

Knockavoe has a comprehensive Child Protection Policy in place and all parents are issued with a leaflet, outlining key elements of this, every 2 years. All staff receive annual Child Protection Training and regular updates. All new/temporary staff are informed of procedures and protocols. Entrance Foyer and all rooms within Knockavoe have Child Protection Officers Information Notices displayed in a prominent place. Vetting Procedures are in place in line with EA (WR) policy.

All visitors must sign in, wear a Visitor Badge and wait in Foyer area until seen.

The Principal and Designated Governor attend EA (WR) Child Protection Training. In-house training takes place for all ancillary staff and EA (WR) provides guidance, support and training for the Child Protection Officers. Confidential records/reports are maintained in a secure filing cabinet by Designated CP Officer.

A notice board in the Foyer contributes to ensuring that a sharing of good communication exists between home, school, community groups/organisations. Information about available courses/events is displayed for parents & others.

Articles 3, 12, 23, 33, 34 & 36 UNCRC

Article 5 "Governments must respect the rights & responsibilities of parents and carers to direct and guide their children as they grow up, so that they can enjoy their rights properly." UNCRC

Article 13 "Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law." UNCRC

2(d)

Professional Development of Staff

PRSD is conducted annually and takes account of both school related strategic aims and personal areas of professional development. All teaching staff participate in PRSD on completion of BT /EPD Induction.

The Principal conducts individual interviews annually with all staff members to ascertain strengths/interests and to provide support for chosen areas of professional development. When and where possible, full or partial financial assistance may be offered to staff completing a chosen area of study, in agreement with Governors.

Staff are actively encouraged to develop their expertise in meeting the wide and varied needs of the pupils. EA (WR), NWRC Strabane Campus, ASD Services, Behaviour Support Team, Middletown and WHSCT are among some of those providing training in specialist areas. Ms Emma Wallace and Ms Claire Grogan are fully trained Team Teach Tutors and facilitate training for staff on an on-going basis to meet pupil/school need. Visits to other schools to observe good practice are encouraged and Staff Training Record Files are located in the staffroom for all staff to maintain records of courses/ training completed. Baker/Staff Development Days are jointly planned, agreed and reviewed to address the identified strategic aims of the 3-year SDP, staff well-being and any other areas of identified importance to meet & address pupil/staff need on an on-going basis.

2(e)

Managing Attendance/Promoting Health & Well-Being of Staff

Knockavoe manages the attendance of all staff in a sensitive and confidential manner in line with EA guidelines. OH Referrals are made in line with EA (WR) Policy. Attendance Item listed on Agenda at each Board of Governors Meeting.

Staff Absence Review Meetings, due to persistent or long-term sickness, are conducted by the Principal in accordance with EA Policy.

All staff are kept fully informed of confidential support agencies available via the Principal/VP/Union Reps and staff notice-board.

Pastoral care of all staff is very important and the Principal, VP and Heads of Department work together to support staff and provide advice and assistance.

We strive to create an environment wherein all pupils and staff feel secure, happy, respected and valued. Attendance levels are consistently high at Knockavoe School and the welcoming ethos of Knockavoe School is evident to all.

2(f)

Promoting Links with Parents, Community and Others

Staff meet with parents on a formal and informal basis throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to discuss concerns, worries or issues relating to their child with the teacher and class team as appropriate. Daily contact is maintained between home and school by means of home/school diaries in both Primary and Secondary Departments. Parents are welcome to telephone the school and/or meet with the Principal/VP/Heads of Department to discuss issues or concerns or to seek advice and support.

Parents, Church leaders and others are encouraged to attend class/school Celebrations, special Assemblies, Shows and Coffee Mornings. Knockavoe School has a very active and dedicated PTA "Friends of Knockavoe", who organise many successful fundraising events throughout the school year. Parents/guardians are invited to participate in educational outings, sports day, prize-giving, volunteering and fundraising events. Requests for meeting specific needs of parents to understand and support their children are facilitated, where possible, and include providing Autism Support (ASD Service), Makaton Training, Medical Training (WHST), OT/Physio/SALT Guidance and Counsellor Support for pupils (New Life).

Knockavoe School supports a range of both local and global charity appeals including UNICEF Day for Change, Autism Awareness Month, Romania Appeal, Foyle Hospice, Downs Syndrome, Concern, Marie Curie, Strabane Food Bank and Macmillan Cancer.

Knockavoe has a global link to the building of a new special school in Tanzania.

Harvest and Christmas Hampers are distributed annually by pupils to local charities. Shoe Boxes are filled each Christmas for Blythswood Charity.

Riding for the Disabled, Swimming Coaching, Youth Club, Library Storytelling, Alley Theatre and Local Recreational Visits are undertaken by pupils on a weekly basis.

Knockavoe pupils attend many educational establishments such as NWRC Strabane Campus, Holy Cross College, St Mary's Primary School and Gael Scoil Ui Dhochartaigh for collaborative educational links and events. Pupils join with other special and mainstream schools for sporting activities and drama presentations.

Collaboration with AESOP pupils continues throughout the year as part of DMLC.

The Nerve Centre, Foyle Film Club and Lifford Cinema accommodate Knockavoe pupils on a regular basis.

Local employers provide work-experience opportunities for FE pupils.

Residential trips (2-5 day duration) take place annually to Gortatole.

Parents/pupils from the school are provided with details of annual Easter trip to Lourdes, France by IHCPT.

Local newspapers/radio stations celebrate the successes of our pupils on a regular basis and pupils are encouraged to share their success with their peers at class/whole school assemblies. The Praise Book, which is read out at the weekly Assembly, provides a forum for sharing and celebrating pupil/staff/school success and raises self esteem and confidence for all.

2(g)

Effective use of ICT

In Knockavoe School ICT is used to:

- Enable all pupils to access the curriculum
- Provide Visual Schedules, PECs, Choice Boards and time-tables

- Complete, where appropriate, end of Key Stage Assessment Units
- Plan, complete , present and discuss personal units of study
- Enhance teacher planning & preparation
- Prepare & Evaluate IEPs
- Monitor, Record & Evaluate pupil progress
- Enable teachers to plan , deliver and evaluate daily lessons
- Ensure consistency of departmental planning & delivery
- Assist Staff Development Planning & Delivery
- Record, Evaluate & Plan Staff Training
- Support staff in PRSD process
- Complete Parental Reports/Annual Review Statements/Reports for AHPs/Social Services etc
- Devise & Evaluate Questionnaires for School Self Evaluation Process
- Ensure effective, efficient & prompt staff communication/sharing of information from other agencies/DENI/EA
- Showcase pupil's work, residential experiences, educational outings, liaisons with outside agencies, sporting activities and drama presentation
- iPads to enable pupils to access curriculum/educational & leisure activities
- Ensure effective communication with Board of Governors and EA.

Article 17 "Every child has the right to reliable information that they can understand & be protected from materials that may harm them." UNCRC

The Student Council plays a vital role in representing the voice of all pupils.

Article 13 "Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law." UNCRC

3(a)

School Financial Position

Knockavoe School has a partially delegated budget and this is managed by and in accordance with, directives from EA (WR).

Internal Audit conducted by WELB (2014/15) covered the major systems within Knockavoe and final report states that “Based on our review of the systems outlined in the audit scope, Internal Audit is satisfied that in most instances best practice and Board guidance are being adhered to.” (5.1 Conclusion, Final Audit Report Knockavoe School 2014-2015)

Staff salaries are controlled directly by EA (WR). Group 4 ISR has been assigned to Knockavoe.

Knockavoe has considerable valued ongoing support from staff, parents and the local community. This provides the school with funds to support and enhance educational outings, end of term celebrations, class requests and purchase of various items including toys, beanbags etc. All donations are acknowledged in writing and staff and Board of Governors are made aware of these.

Staff and Governors are informed of how donations are used and the Principal Reports contain Finance as an item on the Agenda at all Board of Governor Meetings.

The School Secretary maintains all school bank accounts and provides up to date current bank transaction information for scrutiny, if/when requested, by the Principal, EA (WR) or Governors. The designated Governor for Finance conducts an annual review of the school account and signs off on paperwork.

Friends of Knockavoe are a registered charity (PTA) which organises and raises funds for the school. This includes staff, parents and friends of pupils attending our school and is the PTA group for the school. Many events for fund raising are organised throughout the school year by Friends of Knockavoe and all accounts are maintained by their Treasurer with Accounts being prepared and disseminated at their Annual General Meeting. All members are subject to vetting procedures in line with PTA (NI) regulations.

3(b)

Planned use of Projected Resources

This will be directly related to the Strategic Aims contained within the current School Development Plan (SDP) and will be prioritised accordingly.

Professional Development will be financially supported, where possible, according to identified school priorities.

Current Professional Development priorities include the raising of the school profile locally & globally, creative & expressive arts to raise pupil confidence & self-esteem and raising literacy/numeracy within the school.

4

Assessment of Key Targets

Developments and progress since completion of SDP 2011-2014 include:

Curriculum

1. Jolly Phonics-very effective. Reading Schemes available in school to address pupil needs. Every class conducts daily/weekly Jolly Phonics lesson.
2. Assessment Team has produced Progression Booklet to chart progression for all pupils through the school. Evidence to assist planning.
3. Post Primary Curriculum has been further adapted to reflect and meet the individual needs of pupils through continued provision of suitable accredited courses, collaborative opportunities, work experience and Nurture Provision.
4. Annual Reviews & Reporting to parents carried out and IEP Meetings take place -planning reflects relevant outcomes.
5. Sounds Write Programme Training has taken place for all teachers and is being rolled out in classes.

Pastoral

1. Teachers Union Reps in place for NASUWT & INTO.
2. UNISON Rep for classroom assistants is Mrs C McDaid.
3. New Risk Assessment Format devised in conjunction with SEBD Team and SMT.
4. Risk Assessments carried out for identified pupils in line with school policy, signed off on by Chair of Board of Governors, parents and relevant professionals and adhered to by all.
5. Pastoral Care for all Staff provided by Principal and SMT and support offered by relevant agencies at EA (WR).

Health Education

1. Healthy Eating Policy adhered to within all classes.
2. Healthy meals provided onsite by canteen staff.
School Canteen achieved "Good Hygiene Rating 5".
3. Allergy /food intolerance details provided by parents and notified to canteen supervisor and class teams. Medical training provided as required.
4. Alternative Therapies carried out by trained members of staff.
5. Sexual Health, Relationships and Building Self Esteem Programmes in place.
6. Counselling Service for pupils in place- currently provided by New Life and previously by Barnardos. Counsellor remains the same.

Article 16 "Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life." UNCRC

Article 18 "Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child." UNCRC

Article 27 "Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs." UNCRC

Extended Learning Experiences

1. Youth Club opportunities with Melvin Hall provided.
2. Primary & Secondary Department weekly in-house youth clubs in place.
3. Staff teams reconstituted to meet needs of school & Area of Learning Coordinators in place.
4. Child Protection Training and updates delivered to all school community, parents and ancillary staff.
5. Principal completed Child Protection & Team Teach Training.
6. New staff supported by Principal, VP and SMT. Beginning Teachers and Student Teachers supported by Ms Catherine McGonagle. Student/Volunteer Placements managed by Ms Catriona Kerrigan. Register of Attendance of Students maintained at Office.

Learning Community

1. Knockavoe continues to take an active part in DMLC.
2. Principal attends DMLC meetings & is current Chairperson (2015/16).
3. DMLC- Careers -Peter Doherty & Curriculum-Grainne Dunne.
4. Collaboration courses and opportunities in place for Knockavoe pupils.
5. Collaboration in place with AESOP.

Learning Environment

1. Soft Play Area developed and completed in 1st Corridor.
2. Dark Room developed in 1st Corridor.
3. Sensory Room developed in ASD 1 classroom.
4. Head/Deputy Head Boy & Girl positions in place.
5. Class Prefects in place within Senior Department.

6. Recording Studio-work has taken place and Recording Studio fully functioning.
7. Outside areas have been enhanced and include new seating, benches, Totem Poles, Willow Tunnel.
8. Outdoor Classroom created and provides opportunities for all.
9. Field of Hope (daffodils) has been planted and climbing roses and colourful bushes have been added to the planted areas.
10. School won Best Kept School Award 2011 in WELB (SuperValu).
11. New signage and enhancement of Entrance Area completed.
12. Trim Trail created and soft pour surface added.
13. Fencing and gates for security & safety provided.
14. Extension completed to new Class 3.
15. New Build of 2 senior classrooms, sensory room, storage and wide corridors completed Aug`15.
16. New access road and Ambulance Bay created at rear of school.
17. Painting of corridors, staffroom, offices, canteen area & Hall completed Oct`15.

5.

Challenges & Opportunities facing Knockavoe School

The pupil numbers at Knockavoe School have been gradually rising each year since it opened on this site in 2005 with 32 pupils. A major challenge facing school managers is to ensure that the existing accommodation and existing staffing is used effectively to support learning and support pupil well-being for diverse groups of learners. This requires decisions to be made regarding the use of rooms and the use of human resources, with the needs of pupils as the primary consideration at all times. The current economic constraints require managers to look at the best use of existing accommodation and the Principal & Governors will continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with the EA (WR) to ensure pupil needs are met and high quality teaching and learning experiences are at the core of all practices at Knockavoe School.

As the profile of pupils within the special school sector changes, this provides both opportunities and challenges. Due to the marked increase of pupils attending Knockavoe School with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Complex Medical Needs, Autism and Severely Challenging Behaviour, specific approaches and strategies have been developed. Through staff development work, staff training, mentoring, PRSD work and on-going classroom experiences, staff are up-skilled to meet pupil needs. This is an on-going process as the school endeavours to ensure that all staff feel confident and competent in working with the diverse range of pupil needs within our school. The expertise being developed in-house provides an opportunity for the school to become an outward looking centre of excellence in the development and implementation of strategies to include and support all learners, regardless of need. Feedback from staff in local secondary schools, who attended training in working with pupils with additional needs & Mini Me Yoga, highlighted how valuable the practice we are developing in these areas is to our colleagues in mainstream schools. This work will be developed and disseminated throughout our DMLC members.

The five members of SMT work cohesively to promote, encourage and model best practice within a rights respecting environment so that the benefits are felt by all.

A review of the management structure within the school in early 2015 resulted in an additional curriculum leadership role for Literacy & Numeracy. The Vice Principal post was vacated by Nick Tomlinson in June`14 due his promotion as Principal of Groarty Integrated PS. The newly appointed VP in Dec`14 was Miss Grainne Dunne. The challenge now for SMT is to develop leadership capacity within the newly formed Team and to distribute leadership tasks appropriately throughout the teaching staff in order to “grow” the next generation of experienced and skilled leaders.

SMT members, in collaboration with and guidance from the Principal and RTU training materials, are currently undertaking training in Building Leadership Capacity and this shall then be disseminated, by these members, to other members of the teaching staff over the next 3 years.

The Principal and SMT have consulted with all staff, through meetings, workshops and training days, to identify and expand upon the areas for development central to our SDP over the next three years.

These areas for development include:

- the use of qualitative and quantitative data to support learning in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.
- safe inclusion and quality provision for pupils with PMLD/Autism/Complex Medical Needs/Severely Challenging Behaviour (Nurturing Approach)
- the embedding of curriculum responsibilities-Area of Learning Roles
- the provision of quality inclusive experiences for all pupils through the development of outdoor areas and community links.
- the raising of pupil self-esteem & confidence through Creative Arts
- the Development and Building of Leadership Capacity.

The primary challenge for school managers is to support and empower leaders at all levels to develop their practice and the practice of others in these areas, in order that pupil learning opportunities are maximised. At all times the health, wellbeing and educational experience of all pupils is at the core of our school community and this guides the work that takes place at Knockavoe School.

6.

Ascertainment of others` viewpoints

Knockavoe has put in place a comprehensive consultation process which seeks the views and opinions of all staff, parents/guardians, pupils, collaboration agencies and those involved with our school. We use self evaluation tools and questionnaires to gather, collate and provide us with relevant information regarding all aspects of school life. Results are disseminated to all staff, parents and Board of Governors. We aim to conduct this self evaluation questionnaire on a 2-year basis.

7.

Identification of Areas for Development

The Strategic Aims for Knockavoe School for 2015-2018 have been developed in consultation with all stakeholders and they will be reviewed on a bi-yearly basis.

Please see attached Strategic Aims and Action Plans