

## Maynooth BNS PTA AGM Minutes 2009

The AGM was held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 at 8pm.

### Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, David Walsh, opened the meeting by welcoming all those present and introducing Edel VanDuyvenvoorde, PTA Treasurer, Peter Coakley, School Principal and the guest speaker for the night, Marie Roddy, Nutritionist at the National Children's Hospital in Tallaght. David invited all those present to read the minutes from last year's AGM, which were distributed on the night. He also outlined the agenda for the night as follows:

- Financial Report 2008/09
- Chairman's Address
- Principal's Address
- Questions and Answers session
- Guest Speaker
- Tea and Coffee

### Financial Report

The Treasurer, Edel VanDuyvenvoorde, presented the financial report :

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• Income	25,857.81
• Expenditure	14,210.24
• Items committed	10,800.00
• Cheques written but not cashed	1,541.77
• Interest Earned	0.88
• Bank charges (refunded )	67.88
• Sponsored Walk	7,342.00
• Balance Carried forward	847.57

There were no questions arising from the Financial Report.

### Chairman's Address

David addressed the meeting and explained how the 2008/2009 School Term was a very busy year for the PTA, with a combination of regular events and some new departures.

The list of **regular events** which are supported within the school continues to grow:

- Tea & Coffee services are provided at the Junior Infants Introductory Day, First Communions, Confirmation and 6<sup>th</sup> Class Graduation.

- Time and resources are dedicated to planning the school website, book covering and the annual book fair. Also, planning and work goes into the 6<sup>th</sup> class Community Day, where a day of activities is organised to allow the pupils to meet their new secondary school class mates.

As outlined in the Financial Report, there is a long list of items which the school would not have were it not for the Annual Subscription and other fund raising activities.

**New events** last year which, due to their success will hopefully continue into future years, included:

- School Open Day. Anyone who attended this event earlier this year will agree that it provided us with a unique insight into the day-to-day workings of the school.
- School Musical. PTA involvement here ranged from set construction to running the shop and the raffle, as well as financial support. The Musical provided two hugely entertaining evenings for all those that were there.

Another event that was organised back in November in association with the other schools in the area, was an **Education Cuts Meeting** with our local representatives. It not only got an important message to our TDs but it also fostered improved links between the PTAs of the local schools. In light of the education cuts, it is very important to keep the numbers attending the school at a sufficiently high level to maximise Department of Education funding. One of the aims of the PTA for 2009/2010 will be to promote the school at every opportunity. To help with this, the committee is creating a **new PRO role**. Any help parents can provide in terms of contacts etc. would be greatly appreciated.

### **Fundraising**

This year the PTA ran a fundraising event outside of the normal annual subscription for the first time. This decision was taken in light of what parents were being asked to support – the provision of a **defibrillator** and the associated training. It was agreed that this was a request that could not be refused; however, the resources were not available. Thanks to the enormous success of the sponsored walk (€7342), it was possible to increase the number of staff being trained to use this vital piece of equipment.

David also outlined that given the financial success of the walk, and also in light of the current economic climate, the PTA have decided to review the funding arrangements. Traditionally, each year every family was asked to make an **annual contribution** of €100 and this is what was used to pay for the various activities. Although the response has always been very generous, concern was expressed that this year in particular family disposable income will be down and people may find it harder to support the contribution. As a result, it was decided to lower the contribution to €50 for 2009/2010. To make up for any shortfall, the PTA plan to run a number of fund-raising events during the year such as cake sales, sponsored walks etc. Hopefully this will prove to be of assistance to parents in balancing their budgets but also in assisting to provide an income to support the school.

**Donate an Hour** was also explained and encouraged by David. This is a scheme whereby assistance of any nature is welcomed and encouraged by the PTA. The idea is to broaden the base of helpers and also the range of skills the PTA can call upon. Donating an hour might mean you only get one call throughout the whole year but at least it will allow us to spread the workload and introduce some new faces.

The example of what David meant was given by a call for some carpentry support to help build some storage units in the hall for the sports equipment. David explained the “donate an hour” scheme does not necessitate attending the monthly meetings, however new PTA members are always welcomed.

David **concluded** his address by first thanking the Principal, Peter Coakley, who attends the PTA meetings on behalf of the board of Management, and Bridgeen MaLaughlin, who is the teacher’s representative. Thanks were also expressed to Dominic, for his help with getting the various venues ready for use. In thanking the PTA Committee David gave a special word of gratuity to Marie Moore O’Connor and Ann Hafdioui. Both Marie and Ann have given years of service to the PTA, which came to an end as their sons graduated last June. David thanked everybody for their attention and handed over to the Principal, Peter Coakley.

### **Principal’s Address**

Mr. Peter Coakley addressed the AGM by thanking all those who attended and remarking on the good turn-out on the evening. He explained how at a recent staff meeting he received a unanimous agreement from the staff that the PTA made an enormous contribution to the school and he wanted to use his address as an opportunity to express his formal thanks. He acknowledged the large contribution the Board of Management made to the school and thanked them too. The annual Year Book which was recently produced was thanks to the Board of Management.

**Cut Backs.** Recent financial cutbacks have led to an increase in the teacher pupil ratio from 27:1 to 28:1. This has directly led to 3 classes being re-divided into 2 classes, and overall a creeping increase in the class sizes in the school. Peter also expressed his concern as to the impact further cuts would have. He went on to list other areas where the cutbacks were having an effect on the school:

- The reduction in the free books scheme for families who needed assistance, leaving nowhere to turn for these families.
- A reduction in the sub-teachers available to cover for sick leave. This has a knock-on effect as it forces classes to be spread around the school when a sub-teacher is now not available, which also has an effect on the receiving class.
- The moratorium on staff promotion. This affects the internal structure of the school. E.g. the retirement of Mr. O’Connor and up-coming retirement of Mr. McBride would lead to the vacating of senior management positions that would not be re-filled.

- Times of Staff Meeting. This was a direct instruction from the INTO, staff meetings now must be held within school working hours.

On the **good news** front:

- Peter was happy to report progress on the building plans for the 3 new classrooms overhead. The original lowest tender bid withdrew which forced the school back to the drawing boards and Peter was now optimistic and hopeful a contract was about to be signed and the work would soon proceed. A large amount of co-operation was required as classes would be moved, the computer room would be required for a class room and the school would once again lose the PE Hall to a class room. Despite all of this Peter was glad to report no complaints were expressed to him.
- Ms. Henderson was thanked for her 6 years fabulous service as she moved to new pastures and was replaced by Ms. Meehan.
- The extension of the Readers programme which has been possible by the donation of €5,000 from the PTA. In addition to this the further development of the ICT resources in the school included data projectors in each class room. Peter also mentioned the provision of the All-Weather Pitch remained a huge positive amongst the staff and the boys in the school. This too was provided by the funds available through the PTA a number of years ago now.

### **Mr. Coakley's highlights**

For Peter, the **Open day** during 2008/2009 was a highlight. He believed it gave an opportunity for the parents to see the school in action. He noted nothing new was created for the day but everything that was put on view was genuinely carried out in the school at some stage throughout the year. The boys themselves also really enjoyed it and the hope was a similar day would be run again this year.

There was a **Gardai visit** to the 5<sup>th</sup> class back in September. This was thanks to the persistence of Fiona Maguire, who pursued this over the last five years. Peter expressed his thanks to Fiona.

The **defibrillator** is seen by Peter as a super achievement for the school. It came about from staff enquiring about it. However, as no funds were available within the school, the PTA was approached. The sponsored walk was organised and now training has taken place. A larger number of staff have been and will be trained than originally anticipated due to the generous funding from the parents.

Peter concluded his address by saying he is proud to be Principal of Maynooth BNS. He considers the staff and quality of teaching to be second to none, and thanked the teachers for their support and daily involvement.

David thanked Peter for his address and opened the floor to questions and answers.

Q1. Could PC outline the effect of the cutbacks on the children with special needs in the school?

- A. There is no direct impact on the resource teaching. However, the cutbacks have forced a review of role of the SNAs within the school. Ten children receive support and from Christmas the SNA positions will be cut from six to five. This will mean that each child will miss out somewhat.

Q2 (to David Walsh). How will the shortfall in income be made up?

- A. The formal request for the voluntary contribution is to be dropped to €50 per year. However, the €100 per year contribution will remain very welcome. The PTA also plan to run two to three fund raising events throughout the coming year and they plan to coordinate these events with the girls' school to soften the blow on parents.

Q3. On wet days, when the PE hall is used as a classroom, where do the children go to do PE?

- A. There is no alternative. The Parish Hall is closed and the use of the post-primary school is not an option. There is an application in for the last five years for a new PE hall. Once again, PC expressed his delights at the current building developments within the school. He concluded with the observation that there is a PE timetable drawn up which included every class.

Q4 (to DW). What percentage of families contributed to the voluntary family contribution?

- A. The PTA has never examined that figure. It was debated whether decreasing the annual contribution was wise. Fund-raising suggestions were made and the advantages of getting the children involved were highlighted. PC expressed his opinion that a better return may be seen from the fund-raising events. It was agreed that the PTA would try this new approach for this year.

Q5. In the past, three classes were merged into two. Can a letter be sent out in advance of this event in future?

- A. At the last minute (ie. August), there can be a substantial difference in student numbers compared to what was expected. This can be up to ten children some years. It was noted that advance notice can sometimes cause upset for the notice period. However, PC acknowledged that the other (ie. Not giving advance notice) is also possible. The decision is always based on the lowest class numbers and it is always taken in consultation with senior staff.

Q6. Can PC comment on the letter that was received by Ms. McMahon's class re. Swine Flu?

- A. The HSE gave an update and advice in late August/early September. The official decision of the HSE was if there are strong symptoms one treats for Swine Flu. PC pointed out that there had been one other occurrence in another class room. A letter has been sent home to advise that if there is suspected Swine Flu you should withdraw your child for seven days and watch for symptoms as per the HSE guidelines. This is for two reasons:
  - i. Not to increase the risk.
  - ii. To respect confidentiality.

Q7. Could an update of the school calendar be put up on the school website over the summer?

- A. PC acknowledged that this was an oversight this year. The responsibility for the managing of the school website is in the process of being handed over to the school. Noel Davis will take this over and regular updates will be performed from now on. PC also wanted to take this opportunity to highlight all the positive and constructive comments the school has received about the website.

Guy Parker proposed and Fiona Maguire seconded the minutes of 2008/2009's AGM.

David Walsh thanked Peter for his time and introduced and welcomed Marie Roddy, who gave a very interesting and enlightening talk on children's nutrition.

David closed the meeting by thanking all those who attended. He also encouraged new members to join, and looked forward to meeting them and current members at next week's PTA meeting, to be held on 7 October, 2009 at 8pm.

*Tea and coffee were then served.*