



St. Patrick's Parish Dungiven



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Dear Parishioners

FUTURE OF SAINT PATRICK'S COLLEGE DUNGIVEN

Many of you will by now have heard or read media coverage regarding Saint Patrick's College. There is a danger that inaccurate speculation regarding the future of Saint Patrick's College may be damaging both to the College and to our community in general. I wish therefore to advise you as follows:

For many years now our College has had an enrolment number of which in the view of the Department of Education, supported by senior managers in the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools (CCMS), is well below the optimum number for a post primary College. The focus of these strategic governing bodies has been to see small schools removed from the community and children attending much larger schools. The Department of Education controls the quality of education in our post primary schools through what is known as the 'National Curriculum' supported by an 'Entitlement Framework'. Saint Patrick's College adheres to ALL the requirement of the National Curriculum and As well as satisfying the Entitlement Framework which ensures that all young people attending our College have the same opportunity to study whatever subjects they desire as would be available in our larger neighbouring Colleges. Our College led by Michael Gormley and supported by a fabulous group of dedicated teachers and staff have consistently achieved significantly better examination results than the national average. This has all been done well within the budgets allocated by the Department of Education. In other words we are a VERY successful post primary school and our ONLY failing is that we are a SMALL College.

There has been previous initiatives led by the CCMS at the behest of the Department of Education aimed at merging us with other colleges or other sharing arrangement which the governors of Saint Patrick's College has strongly resisted and there is little doubt that our College's success in delivering excellent examination results for our children has made it very difficult for any of the CCMS initiatives to succeed. However, the latest initiative 'Area Planning: Annual Action Plan (April 2017 – March 2018) is just a further attempt by CCMS to begin a process which may be damaging to the future of our college and which will be strongly resisted by the governors of the College.

We believe that long term future of our college lies in the hands of you the parishioners. Our parish is one of a small number of large parishes in the Diocese of Derry, just a little smaller than Limavady and significantly bigger than Maghera. Both of these areas have post primary schools with student number in excess of 1,000 whilst Saint Patrick's College has approximately 240. The majority of our young people travel out of our town to neighbouring schools that in most cases do not have superior examination results than our own. Saint Patrick's college has a much smaller pupil/teacher ratio than our large neighbouring Colleges which contributes to the success of our College. Saint Patrick's College receives many visitors throughout the year and invariably the visitors comment upon the lovely young people in our College. Our young people reflect the good values passed on to them from their parents in this community. We believe that our college is one of the most successful in the North and our track record of success should provide most parents of primary school leavers with a strong assurance of the best quality education. Our College is NOT closing down but will remain under threat unless we receive significantly increased support from our community.

Finally our college remains an extremely important part of our community infrastructure. We are not asking parents to make bad choices for their children – all the evidence of our examination success makes it clear that our college is a very successful one and our aim is to build the numbers attending our College up to a level more in line with the school population in our area.

Eamon Dallett – Chair of Board of Governors

Father Seamus Kelly – Senior Trustee of our College